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ON DIACHRONIC ORIGINS OF CONVERBS IN MAITHILI

Ramawatar Yadav

Introduction

The converb (also termed 'absolute', '*pūrvakālika kriyā*', and 'conjunctive participle') is one of the characteristic devices for linking sequences of clauses to the host clause in Maithili.

The converb in Maithili is a linguistically valid category. It tends to share all the four main characteristics that are associated with converbs across the human languages of the world, i.e. nonfinite, verb form, adverbial, and subordination (Haspelmath 1995: 4). Maithili converb too does not have the degree of autonomy that is associated with the status of lexemes; clearly it is inflectional, and not derivational.

The converb in Modern Maithili is marked by the affix *-kə/-ke* (also by an allomorph *-kə* depending on idiolectal stylistic predilections and written variously in Devanāgarī as *<-ka>*, *<-kae>*, *<-kaya>*, and *<-ke>*) which is attached to a tenseless verb of a nonfinite clause in a sentence.

A preliminary description of the morphology of the Modern Maithili converb *<-ka>* is reported in Yadav (2001) wherein it is described that *<-ka>* is a non-neutral affix in that it tends to trigger changes in the shape of the verbal base to which it is attached. The purpose of the present paper is to present a historical linguistic survey of the diachronic origins of Maithili converbs in Old Maithili and Middle Maithili.

The sources of material for the purpose of the present analysis are listed below:

Old Maithili (circa 9th to 16th centuries)

1. *Caryāpada* (circa 800-1100) hymns of Siddha poets
2. *Varṇa-Ratnākara* (circa 1325) of Jyotirīśvara (circa 1280-1340)
3. *Kīrtipatākā* (early 15th century) of Vidyāpati (circa 1360-1448)

4. *Kīrttilatā* (circa 1406) of Vidyāpati
5. *Gorakṣavijaya-nāṭaka* (early 15th century) of Vidyāpati
6. *Padāvalī* (early 15th century) of Vidyāpati

Middle Maithili (circa 17th to 18th centuries)

Middle Maithili Works from Mithilā

7. *Padāvalī /Bhajanāvalī* (early 17th century) of Govindadāsa
8. *Pārijātaḥaraṇa-nāṭaka* (early 17th century) of Umāpati
9. *Rukmiṇīpariṇaya-nāṭaka* (mid 18th century) of Ramāpati
10. *Haribans/Kṛṣṇajanma* (mid 18th century) of Manabodha

Middle Maithili Plays by Malla Kings from Nepal

11. *Haragatīrīvivāha-nāṭaka* (1629) of Jagajyotirmalla (1614-1637)
12. *Hari Ścandranṛtyam-nāṭaka* (1651) of Siddhinarasiṃhamalla
13. *Prabhāvatīḥaraṇa-nāṭaka* (1656) of Jagatprakāśamalla (1643-1672)
14. *Pradyumnaviṇaya-nāṭaka* (1666) of Jagatprakāśamalla
15. *Parśurāmopākhyāna-nāṭaka* (1713) of Bhūpatīndramalla (1696-1722)
16. *Vidyāvilāpa-nāṭaka* (1720) of Bhūpatīndramalla

It is hoped that this historical linguistic analysis will help trace the chronological growth of Maithili converbs through a time span of around 1000 years; it may also help establish linkages with the contemporary usage of converbs in Modern Maithili.

Old Maithili (circa 9th to 16th centuries)

The oldest specimens of the Maithili language are to be found in the *Caryāpada*. There is a controversy with regard to the language of *Caryāpada* being Old Bengali or Old Maithili. The controversy rages on to include Old Assamese, Old Oriya, and even Old Hindi. A number of eminent Bengali scholars and linguists (e.g. Hara Prasad Shastri 1916, Suniti Kumar Chatterji 1926, Prabodh Chandra Bagchi 1938, Md. Shahidullah 1940, Sukumar Sen 1948/65, Prabodh Chandra Bagchi & Shanti Bhikshu Shastri 1956) have edited, analyzed, and published the *Caryāpada* as a work of Bengali. A Norwegian scholar, Per Kvaerne (1977), has also treated it as a work of Bengali and published its English edition in Oslo, Norway. Scholars of Maithili, on the other hand, have put forward linguistic evidence and claimed vigorously and unreservedly that the *Caryāpada* hymns are written in some form of Old Maithili. Prominent among these are: Jayakanta Mishra (1949:

-iā
daśami duārata cihna *dekhiā* (3:82)
'having seen'

āli kāli beṇi sārī	suṇiā	(17:146)
'having heard'		
dombi	bibāhiā	ahāriu jāma
(19:155)		
'having married'		
dukhē sukhē eku	kariā	bhuñjaī indījānī
(34:208)		
'making/having made'		

It is worth noting here that the Modern Maithili converb <-ka> and its historical antecedents are totally unavailable in the *Caryāpada*.

***Varṇa-Ratnākara* (circa 1325)**

The *Varṇa-Ratnākara* of Jyotirīśvara-kaviśekharaṇācārya was composed in 1325 and it is preserved in a Manuscript copied in 1507. It happens to be the oldest extant Maithili prose text and it was published by Suniti Kumar Chatterji & Babua Misra (1940), and Anand Mishra & Govinda Jha (1980). The historical continuity of the converb -i of the *Caryāpada* is also evidenced in the *Varṇa-Ratnākara*. The examples given below are from Chatterji & Misra (1940) and the original pagination of the Manuscript is indicated within brackets.

- i
- lai/lai* (29a) 'carrying/having carried'
- lipi* (52b) 'having smeared the ground
(with clay, cow dung and water)'
- bhai/bhai* (47a) 'having become/becoming'
- je rājadeśe hakāri haluaha* (44b, 'having invited'

In *Varṇa-Ratnākara*, too, the Modern Maithili converb <-ka> or its historical antecedents are unavailable.

***Kīrttipatākā* (early 15th century)**

Vidyāpati's (1350-1448) avahatṭha/apabhraṃsa work *Kīrttipatākā* was edited and published with a Modern Maithili translation by Umesh Mishra (1960a) and with Sanskrit and Hindi translations by Shashinatha Jha and Govind Jha (1992). In *Kīrttipatākā*, too, the converb is expressed by the affix -i. Examples given below are from Umesh Mishra (1960a) and the page numbers are provided within brackets.

<i>sunī vyavahāra subu(dhi)hī paṇḍia</i>	(7) 'having heard'
<i>sabakā ghara ūrbāha palaṭi jani jambia</i>	(7) 'having turned'
<i>parakkhi yāta sanginī</i>	(9) 'having observed/noticed'
<i>lajjālu ki paṭsi mātala</i>	(11) 'having penetrated'
<i>kāhu añcara dhari khañcae</i>	(11) 'having held'

A couple of instances of *-e* affixation are also found in the text:

<i>kāhu āsā due baṁcae</i>	(11) 'giving/having given/offered'
<i>kāhu rosa darasāe kuṭila bhaūha bhare bhangae</i>	(11) 'having shown/exhibited'

It is worth noting that up until the *Kīrttipatākā* of Vidyāpati, the use of the Modern Maithili converb <-ka> or its historical antecedents <-kahū> or <-kahu> is not available.

***Kīrttilatā* (circa 1406)**

Another avahatṭha/apabhraṁśa work of Vidyāpati, *Kīrttilatā*, was edited and published by a number of scholars in Bengali (e.g. Hara Prasad Shastri 1924), Hindi (e.g. Baburam Saksena 1929, 1935; Vasudeva Sharan Agrawal 1962 and Shashinatha Jha 1997), and Maithili (e.g. Umesh Mishra 1960b; Ramanath Jha 1970b; and Govind Jha 1992).

Written in circa 1406, Vidyāpati's prose-verse work *Kīrttilatā* contains numerous examples of *-i* affixation expressing the role of the converb. Examples cited below are from Govind Jha (1992) and page numbers are provided within brackets.

<i>sāhasa sādhi</i>	(8) 'having upheld'
<i>pātisāhi ārādhi</i>	(8) 'having worshipped'
<i>pīṭṛvaīra uddhari</i>	(8) 'having avenged'
<i>maryādā chāḍi</i>	(18) 'having abandoned'
<i>mukhacandra kari adhogati dekhi</i>	(22) 'having seen'
<i>rāahni karo mukhāravinda dekhi</i>	(36) 'having seen'
<i>dhari caraṇātala appiā</i>	(38) 'having held'
<i>niña sāja upekkhi</i>	(44) 'having noticed/observed'
<i>garua garua suṇḍa māri</i>	(48) 'having killed/hit'

kumbhodbhava kare niyama *peḷi* (48) 'having pushed/observed'
sattu karī kittikallolīnī *lāghī* bhela pāra (50) 'having crossed over'

Occasionally, the *-ia* of the *Caryāpada* is also used in the *Kīrttilatā*.
Examples are from Baburam Saksena (1935/1965):

Chodḍia 'having abandoned' (Saksena 1935/65: 70)
karia 'having done' (Saksena 1935/65: 70)

A few instances of *-e* affixation expressing the role of the converb are also evident in the *Kīrttilatā*:

dhāe 'having run' (Saksena 1935/65: 62)
dekhāe 'having shown' (Saksena 1935/65: 66)

What is curious is that the commonly used converb of Middle Maithili, <*-kahū*>, is also found in the *Kīrttilatā*. The affix <*-kahū*> may thus be termed as a precursor of the Middle Maithili converb <*-kahu*> or <*-kahū*>, and of the Modern Maithili <*-ka*> or <*-kae*>. As in Modern Maithili, the addition of <*-kahū*> to verb stems triggers alternation in verb stems in the *avahatṭha/apabhraṃsa* of *Kīrttilatā* as well.²

Examples:

<i>sunī kahū</i>	(Saksena 1935/65: 98)
'having heard'	
<i>dhāe kahū</i>	(" : 62)
'having run'	
<i>ṭhelli kahū</i>	(" : 100)
'having pushed'	
<i>palaṭi kahū</i>	(" : 110)
'having turned around'	

***Goraṣavijaya-nāṭaka* (early 15th century)**

Vidyāpati's *Goraṣavijaya-nāṭaka* was edited and published (with the rather unclear and illegible photocopy of the original Manuscript written in the Tirhutā/Mithilākṣara script) by Umesh Mishra & Jayakanta Mishra (1961). This Sanskrit play contains songs in Maithili. The examples cited below are from these Maithili songs.

In *Gorakṣavijaya-nāṭaka*, too, the converb is expressed by the affixation of -i, e.g.

- dharama *rākhi* dhana bharia bhaṇḍāra (9)
 'keeping/having observed'
 cārihū diśa *buli* ḍiṇḍima delā (10)
 'having walked around'
 pāni *paṣāri* visuddhaka geāna (14)
 'having washed/cleaned'
 bhanai Vidyāpati anubhava *jāni* (19)
 'having known/experienced'

On one occasion, -ia is also used:

- bhanahi Vidyāpati *jolia* hātha (23)
 'having joined (the palms) together'

***Padāvalī* (early 15th century)**

Vidyāpati's mellifluous songs, popularly known as *Padāvalī*, were edited, translated, and published by a number of scholars in: Bengali (e.g. Sharadacharan Mitra Bangabda 1285/A.D.1878, Nagendranath Gupta Bangabda 1316/A.D.1909, and Khagendranath Mitra and Biman Bihari Mazumdar 1952), Hindi (e.g. Nagendranath Gupta 1910 and Shashinath Jha 1961, 1967, 1979), English (e.g. G. A. Grierson 1882a), and Maithili (e.g. Shivanandan Thakur 1941; Subhadra Jha 1954; Ramanath Jha 1970a; Umanath Jha 1972; Surendra Jha 'Suman' & Ramdeo Jha 1977; Vidyapati Thakur 1979; Govind Jha 1981; and Ramdeo Jha & Mohan Bharadwaj 1999). Of these, I have access mostly to English and Maithili editions of Vidyāpati's *Padāvalī*. The examples cited below are from Shivanandan Thakur (1941) and Vidyapati Thakur 1979, with the song number and the page number provided within brackets.

In *Padāvalī*, too, the converb is most commonly expressed by the affixation of -i, e.g.

- Palāṭa niāsā nirasa *nihāri*, kahabahū kaona hoiti ī gāri (21,355)
 'having seen'
 cāpi cibuka he adhara madhu pibe, kañone jānala hameu dharaba jībe (23,356)
 'having pressed hard'

ghengala <i>bādhī</i> paṭorā dhaelaha aisani tua paripāṭī	(24,356)
‘having tied up/knotted’	
ketaki kusuma <i>āni viraci</i> vividha bāni caūdisa sājala sālā	(30,363)
‘bringing /having brought’ ‘having created’	
tua guṇa <i>kahi kahi murajhi</i> palae mahi, rayani gamābae <i>jāgī</i>	(76,403)
‘having told/described’ ‘having fainted’ ‘having awakened’	

A couple of instances of *-e* <*-e*, *-ya*> affixation are also found in the text:

dūtī <i>bhae</i> janū janamae nāri, binu bhelē bheliḥu goāri	(20,354)
‘having become’	
ghṛta madhu dudha <i>daya</i> , netē <i>bātī kae</i> caūdisā delaka dīpamālā	(30,363)
‘having offered’ ‘having lighted a lamp’	

Thakur's *Padāvalī* also contains one instance of *-kahū* and six instances of *-kae* (a reminiscent of Modern Maithili *-kae*):

<i>-kahū</i>	
sisirē mahipati dāpē <i>cāpikahū</i> rājā bhela vasanta	(17,351)
‘having pressed hard’	
<i>-kae</i>	
manamathatanta antadhari <i>paḍhikae</i> avasarē bheli siānī	(17,351)
‘having read’	
tanhikari dhasamasi virahaka sosa, tañe <i>diḍhakaē</i> kaṭtava posa	(18,352)
‘having made firmer’	
ghṛta madhu dudha <i>daya</i> , netē <i>bātī kae</i> caūdisā delaka dīpamālā	(30,363)
‘having offered’ ‘having lighted a lamp’	
se <i>jāni</i> daīve <i>ānikae</i> niramala kāmīni anta na bhāra/ve	(65,392)
‘having learnt’ ‘having brought’	
aisani <i>kae paribodhi</i> paṭhaihaha	(74,401)
‘having allured/convinced’	
<i>bhala kae</i> hari heri na bhele ī baḍa lāgala bhora	(81,409)
‘in a good manner’	

To conclude thus far, in Old Maithili the converb was mainly morphological, i.e. suffixal. In other words, the suffixes *-i/-ia* and *-e* were attached to consonant-ending and vowel-ending tenseless verb stems, respectively, of a nonfinite subordinate clause of a matrix clause. Use of a

separate and distinct word-like particle or affix was virtually nonexistent in Old Maithili -- although scant uses of such word-like affixes (i.e. *-kahū* and *-kae*) accompanied with concomitant verb stem alternations are traced in Vidyāpati's *Kīrttilatā* and *Padāvalī*.

Middle Maithili (circa 17th to 18th centuries)

Middle Maithili Works from Mithila

Padāvalī/Gītāvalī/Bhajanāvalī (early 17th century)

Govindadāsa's songs, variously entitled as *Padāvalī/Gītāvalī/Bhajanāvalī*, were edited and published by a number of native scholars of Maithili: Mathura Prasad Dixit 1932, S.K. Jha 1933, Amaranatha Jha 1942, and Govind Jha 1982. The examples cited below are from Govind Jha 1982 and song numbers are provided within brackets.

In Govindadāsa's songs, too, the converb is most commonly expressed by the affixation of *-i*:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| benuka phūka dhūka madanānala kula indhanahi <i>pajāri</i> | (5) |
| 'having added fire' | |
| sarabasa <i>lae</i> palaṭali puna bīndhala raṃgini baṃka <i>nihāri</i> | (20) |
| 'having taken away' 'having gazed' | |
| sahacara <i>meli</i> calali jaba sundari kālindi karae sanāna | (21) |
| 'having gathered/accompanied' | |
| bhītaka cīta bhujaga <i>heri</i> je dhani <i>camaki-camaki</i> ghana kāpa | (41) |
| 'having seen' 'having been astonished' | |
| bidagadha mādha anubhava <i>jāni...</i> | (59) |
| 'having learnt/experienced' | |
| <i>jari jari</i> tatahi bhasama sa(ṃ)ghāta | (98) |
| 'having been burnt (into ashes)' | |
| eta <i>kahi</i> sundari dīgha nisāsahi murchiti harala geāna | (105) |
| 'having said/uttered' | |
| sundari rādhā ābae <i>bani</i> | (112) |
| 'having become/adorned as' | |
| se rasa <i>sunī</i> nāgara vara nārī | (120) |
| 'listening to' | |

A few instances of *-e* affixation are also evident in the text:

- bala kae* kharatara nakhara sīkhara saño motima banahi bithāra (13)
‘having added extra energy/force’
adhara sudhā dae punahi jiābae punu niramada kae teja (13)
‘having offered the ambrosia of lips’ ‘having made impotent’
kara kaṃkana *pana kae* sukhabandhana sikhae bhujaga-guru pāse (40)
‘taking an oath’
sīthi banāe bādhaha punu kacarī (65)
‘having parted the hair’
dhāe dhaela giridhāraka vasane (74)
‘having run’

***Pārijātaharaṇa-nāṭaka* (early 17th century)**

The *Pārijātaharaṇa-nāṭaka* of Umāpati Upādhyāya is a Sanskrit-Prakrit play but it contains a total of 20 Maithili songs. This play was edited, translated, and published by Grierson 1917, Chetanatha Jha 1959, and Mishra et al 1984. The examples cited below are from Grierson 1917 and song and page numbers are provided within brackets.

In *Pārijātaharaṇa-nāṭaka*, the converb is expressed exclusively through the affixation of *-i*

- kara jori* rukumini kṛṣṇa saṃga vasanta-raṃga nihārahī (7,30)
‘with folded hands’
kāhi bhajaba *teji* tāhi (10,32)
‘having abandoned’
sabha *pariteji* hari mohi phula delā (16,37)
‘having abandoned’
jaladhara-jāla *jāni* hia hārī (18,40)
‘having learnt about’
katana jatana *dhari* jāu paripālīa sāpa na mānaya pose (20,42)
‘having held (with utmost care)’
ṭhāmahi ṭhora *ṭhoki* binatā-suta bhāngala diggaja dantā (37,53)
‘having hit hard’
guna *bujhi* bhūpa karia sanamāne (42,58)
‘having realized’

***Rukmiṇīpariṇaya-nāṭaka* (mid 18th century)**

The *Rukmiṇīpariṇaya-nāṭaka* of Ramāpati Upādhyāya was edited and published by Jayakanta Mishra 1961/1368 sāla. In this play, too, the converb is commonly expressed by the affixation of *-i* and *-e*. The examples cited below are from J. Mishra 1961, with page numbers provided within brackets.

- i*
- khaṇḍaparaśu tāṇḍava *dekhi* haraṣita (2)
 'seeing/having seen'
- rāja-kāja *teji* (20)
 'having quit'
- e kī sehe *sunī* puna puna muruchu dusaha *gun* (78)
 'having heard/learnt' 'having realized'
- puruba kaluṣacaya *jāni* (82)
 'having known/learnt'
- kahia *vicāri* bidukhi sakhi abahu purata mora kāma (82)
 'having considered'
- sehao *kāṭi* pune *hasi* jadurāe (95)
 'having cut' 'having smiled'
- e*
- bhūpati nikaṭa bheli *gae* ṭhāḍhi (18)
 'having gone'
- lae sakhijana tasu calae samīpe (87)
 'having gathered/accompanied'
- lae gela govinda garuḍa *caḍhāya* (93)
 'having caused to mount'

It is worth noting that a couple of instances of Modern Maithili converb – *kae* are also evident in the text of this play:

- giriṇā sahita sakala agha *duri kae* (3)
 'having removed'
- katae jāha mādharma *kae cori* (94)
 'having stolen/abducted'

***Haribans/Kṛṣṇajanma* (mid 18th century)**

Manabodh's *Haribans* (Skt. *haribamśa*) is one of the most oft-quoted works of Middle Maithili. It was first edited and translated into English by George

Abraham Grierson (1882b, 1884a,b). Later scholars of Maithili who edited and published this work christened it as *Kṛṣṇajanma*, e.g. Umesh Mishra 1934 1948; Dhareshwar Jha n.d.; Ramanath Jha 1949 and Surendra Jha 'Suman' 1970/1988. Maithili Academy, Patna also published a Maithili edition of *Kṛṣṇajanma* (1988).

In *Haribans*, too, converbs are expressed by the affixation of *-i* in consonant- ending verb stems and *-e* in vowel-ending verb stems in general. The examples cited below are from Grierson 1882b and page numbers are provided within brackets.

-i

ī *sunī* sabhaka juḍāela kāna (132)
'having heard/learnt'

añcala *jhāpi* bhavana lai geli (135)
'having covered/covering'

ānana *cumbi* payodhara dhaīla (135)
'kissing /having kissed'

-e

kaṁśa *āe* tohē leta uṭhāe (132)
'having come'

āsikha *daī* hari hridae lagaūla (134)
'having blessed'

hama bharijanma sudini *bhai* rahaba (143)
'having become'

After Vidyāpati's avahaṭṭha/apabhraṁśa work, *Kīrttilatā*, Manabodha's *Haribans* is the first Middle Maithili work in which converbs of *k*-forms are attested, e.g.

-kahu

gai *kahu* gāma gohāri lagāola (137)
'having gone'

dhai *kahu* tāra ka jhaṭahā kaīla (138)
'having held'

bicahi *jhapaṭi kahu* haladhara dhaīla (147)
'having suddenly attacked'

- kahũ*
jiti kahũ majhilahi phani bhela ṭhaḍha (137)
 'having conquered'
caḍhi kahũ ābathi hārathi pheri (150)
 'having climbed'
 -*kae*/*-kaĩ*>
sarasara kaĩ ghara paĩsali dhāya (134)
 'hurriedly'

Middle Maithili Plays by Malla Kings of Nepal

Haragaurīvivāha-nāṭaka (1629)

Jagajjyotirmalla reigned as king of Bhaktapur from 1614 to 1637. His play *Haragaurīvivāha-nāṭaka* was composed in N.S. 749, i.e. A.D. 1629. This play was edited and published by Ramdeo Jha 1970. The examples of converbs cited below are from Ramdeo Jha 1970/1988 and page numbers are provided within brackets.

- i*
vihusi vihusi muni mukha sabe hera (45)
 'having smiled /smilingly'
manamatha māri nāri āliṃgaa (47)
 'having killed/suppressed'
śaśi uṭhi calala akāśe (61)
 'having arisen'
toha teji gati nahi āne (63)
 'having abandoned'
 he īśvara, ñehā duhu vyaktika sāmarasya *dekhi* hamarā baḍa ānanda
 'having seen/witnessed'
 bhela acha (63)
 -*e*
bhasama āga dae ... (34)
 'having applied'
 he pārvvatī mahādeva manoduṣkhe baĩsal chathi *gae* manābaha (59)
 'having gone'
Hariścandraṇṭyam-nāṭaka (1651)

Siddhinarasimhamalla's play *Hariścandranṛtyam-nāṭaka* was composed in N.S. 771, i.e. A.D. 1651. This play was edited and published with a German introduction by August Conrady in 1891.

Originally written as a *habilitationsschrift* submitted to Leipzig University on November 23, 1891, the work was entitled as *Das Hariścandranṛtyam: Ein Almepalesisches Tanzspiel*.

This play is a Bangla-Maithili (more Bangla) mixed play. Consequently, only a few uses of Maithili converbs are evidenced in this play.

-i

tuva mukha *heri* (25)

'having seen'

rāya rāni kare *jori* (32)

'having joined palms together'

rājā *kīni* harara cāṇḍāre (34)

'having bought off'

-kahu

nirantara duṣṭakā saṃge prīti *karikahu* ... (16)

'having been in association with'

rājā hariścandrakā satya *dekhikahu* paramānanda bhaī gera (39)

'having witnessed'

ahe pāpiṣṭha, bhara *kayakahu* baīs (42)

'having relied/having become certain'

***Prabhāvatīharaṇa-nāṭaka* (1656)**

Jagatprakāśamalla reigned as king of Bhaktapur from 1643 to 1672. His play *Prabhāvatīharaṇa-nāṭaka* was composed in N.S. 776, i.e. A.D. 1656. This play was edited and published by Lekhanath Mishra in 1972. In this play, converbs are expressed most generally by an affixation of -i and -kae. One instance of -kahu is also evidenced in it.

The examples cited below are from Lekhanath Mishra 1972 and page numbers are provided within brackets – although we are told by Brinkhaus 1987 that Mr. Mishra has erred copiously in his transliteration from the Newari script into the Devanagari script.

- i
 sehe *dekhi* mora upajala ānanda (8)
 'having seen'
vihusi karaha hama sañe sadabhāva (8)
 'smilingly'
 sira mukuṭa *dhari* paraveśa dela (9)
 'having held/worn'
 he haṁsī ! ihāka kathā *sunī* viraha jvāla bhela (22)
 'having learnt/heard'
 śatru *māri* devatā sabaka sānanda karu (62)
 'having killed'
- e/<-ya>
 he priya loke! antapura *jāya* rahu (19)
 'having gone'
 ... hame vana *gaya* samidha ānaya jāichi (34)
 'having gone'
 he īśvara ! apana putra *pathāe*, vajranābha *māri* devakāja karu (29)
 'having sent' 'having killed'
- kae/<-kaya>
 he haṁsī ! bāpe hama antahpura *avaruddhi kaya* lākhala chiah... (22)
 'having obstructed'
ṣṭṁgāra bhāve *mohi kaya* ānaba (34)
 'having charmed'
- kahu
 katane jatane haṁsī *pathāe kahu* ekara jīva karaba dūre (11)
 'having sent'

***Pradyumnavijaya-nāṭaka* (1666)**

Written in N.S. 786, i.e. May-June 1666 A.D., to be performed on the occasion of his second son Ugramalla's tonsure ceremony, Jagatprakāśamalla's play *Pradyumnavijaya-nāṭaka* was edited and published in Germany by Horst Brinkhaus (1987, Appendix 1, pp. 161-345) with a Roman transliteration and an English translation.

This play may be viewed as a prototype of a Middle Maithili play in that *k*-forms of converbs abound in it. A total of 18 occurrences of *-kahu* are evidenced in the text, while *-i*, *-e* and *-kae* occur only four to five times. A few examples are given below.

-i	
nāradaka bacana <i>māni</i>	(282)
‘having acquiesced’	
jathara <i>phāri</i>	(314)
‘having torn’	
-e	
eka <i>bhaya</i>	(172)
‘having come together/united’	
galahathā <i>dae khedu</i>	(300)
‘having pushed (the neck) by hand’	
-kae	
takhane ihāñā pradyumnaka <i>rūpa kae</i> ...	(250)
‘having looked like/acted as Pradyumna’	
bāgamatī <i>baṃdhana kae</i>	(260)
‘having tied/obstructed the river Bagmati’	
-kahu	
jāe <i>kahu</i>	(196)
‘having gone’	
dekhi <i>kahu</i>	(198)
‘having seen’	
jala <i>snāna kaya kahu</i>	(242)
‘having bathed’	
bhāyi <i>marabāe kahu</i>	(292)
‘having got killed’	
pathāe <i>kahu</i>	(314)
‘having sent	
kāṭi <i>kahu</i>	(314)
‘having killed’	

***Parśurāmopākhyāna-nāṭaka* (1713)**

Bhūpatīndramalla was born on November 18, 1674. He was crowned as the king of Bhaktapur at the age of 22 in 1696. After a rule of 26 years, Bhūpatīndramalla died young at the age of 48 in 1722.

Written in N.S. 833, i.e. A.D. 1713, to be performed on the occasion of the tonsure ceremony of the crown prince, Bhūpatīndramalla's play *Parśurāmopākhyāna-nāṭaka* is as yet unpublished. Research leading to publish a critical edition of the Manuscript of the play containing original Newari text, Devanagari and Roman transliterations, English translation, a

Middle Maithili skeleton-grammar, critical commentary on Medieval dramaturgy, and index is ongoing (R. Yadav, in preparation). For a preliminary enquiry into this play, the reader is referred to R. Yadav and R. Jha 1982 and R. Yadav 1990.

Copious instances of *-i*, *-e*, and *-kae* converbal affixations are available in the Manuscript of this play; only one instance of *-kahu* is available in it. A few examples are provided below.

-i

kanaka kamala sama kuca juga *dekhi* (Folio 7b)

‘seeing/having seen’

vidhumukhi *vihusi* vilokaha thora (Folio 46b)

‘smilingly’

sahasrārjjuna rājā, āsrama nikaṭa *āe*, munirājake *māri*, kāmadhenu

‘coming (near)’

‘killing’

hari laya gela (Folio 58b)

‘abducting’

-e/<-ya>

suvadani sunu *mana daya* mora bāni (Folio 7b)

‘attentively’

tahnika puṣpamālā *pahirāe*, pranāma karu (Folio 16a)

‘garlanding’

jakhane renukā devika, vivāha bhela, indra *āe*, jaūtuka, delahni (Folio 37b)

‘having come/arrived’

rājā *sakrobha bhaya*, hinkāke, khadga prahāre,

‘angrily’

ī *avasthā daya* kāmadhenu hari laya gela (Folio 54b-55a)

‘rendering (him) to such a pitiable condition’

-kae

nagaraloka *bvatura kae*, ānu (Folio 14b)

‘gathering/collecting together’

vicitra vastrālaṃkāra *pahi(ri) kae* (Folio 15a)

‘wearing’

he purohita rājakumārī *prasāhani kae* ānali (Folio 19b)

‘having decorated/bedecked’

ihāñā, *snāna kae*, citā *pradakṣinā kaya* agni praveśa karu (Folio 57a)

‘having bathed’ ‘having circled around’

-kahu

... Ī pāpiṣṭha rājā mṛgayāvyāje āe kahu ...
'having come'

(Folio 51b)

***Vidyāvilāpa-nāṭaka* (1720)**

Written in N.S. 840, i.e. A.D. 1720, Bhūpatīndramalla's play *Vidyāvilāpa-nāṭaka* was edited by Nanigopala Vandopadhyaya 1916-17 and Jayakanta Mishra 1965. Copious instances of *-i* and *-e* affixes of converbs are available in the text, while a mere three occurrences of the *k*-form converb *-kahu* are available in the text. The examples cited below are from Jayakanta Mishra 1965 and page numbers are provided within brackets.

-i

apana nagara *rahi* karaba samāja (4)

'staying/living'

haraṣita hoyā tihi paricaya *jāni* (18)

'having learnt'

se *bujhi* tinu *mili* karaba jatane (27)

'having learnt/understood' 'having united'

-e/<-ya>

parakaṭa *bhaya* hame purāoba kāme (4)

'having appeared (in human form)'

peṭa bharaba duhu vanacara *khāya* (13)

'having devoured/eaten'

-kahu

pāga *bāṃdhi kahu* dhaya taravāre (11)

'having tied (the turban)'

pāna (pothi) *laya kahu*

vividh racita phala *laya kahu* āja (17)

'having taken'

Conclusion

Based on the discussion presented above, the following conclusions may suggest themselves.

- A. In Old Maithili, the converbal affix was invariably *-i* (or, its allomorphic variants *-ia/-iā*). Occasional use of the converbal affix *-e* in vowel-ending verb stems may be viewed as a linguistic innovation of this period in the historical growth of the Maithili language.³

- B. It is a historical coincidence that in the formation of compound verbs in Modern Maithili, the very same *-i* and *-e* affixes are used. In other words, the *-i* and *-e* affixes are isomorphic (for more information, see Yadav 1996). Examples:

1. < o *khā-ø/khā-e* le-l-athi > Complex Predicate
he-hon eat take-PST-3 hon
'He ate up'
2. < o *khā-ø-ka/khā-e-ka* le-l-athi > Converbial Construction
he-hon eat-CONV take-PST-3 hon
'He took (it) after having eaten'
3. < o *cal-i* ge-l-āha > Complex Predicate
he-hon walk go-PST-3 hon
'He went away.'
4. < o *cal-i-ka* ge-l-āha Converbial Construction
he-hon walk-CONV go-PST- 3 hon
'He went walkingly/ He went on foot.'

- C. In Middle Maithili, along with *-i* and *-e* suffixes, converbs were dominantly represented by such *k*-form affixes as *-kahū*, *-kahu*, and *-kae*; these were later transformed into *-ka*, *-kae*, and *-k°* in Modern Maithili. Examples:

5. *dekh-i kahu* 'having seen' (Brinkhaus ed. 1987: 198)
6. *mār-i kahū* 'having killed' (Grierson ed. 1882b: 135)
7. *moh-i kae ānaba* 'having charmed' (L. Mishra ed. 1972: 34)
8. *bāgamatī baṃdhana kae* 'having obstructed the river Bagmati' (Brinkhaus ed. 1987: 260)
9. *calū, re bhāgina, ghur-i ke ghara* 'returning' (Grierson ed. 1885: 639)

- D. In an influential article published in Germany, Grierson ed. 1885: 635 made a highly insightful observation:

Conjunctive Participle. Formed by adding के to the 1st verbal noun. Thus देखिके, देके, पायके etc... The word के commonly called the conj. part. of कर is in reality no such thing. It is derived independently from the Vaidik कर्त्त (Skr. कृत्वा), hence प्र. करिअ (Hem Cha.IV, 271) and Bihari (with elision of र) के. Hence देखिके, means 'having done the action of seeing.'

It is thus clear that the Modern Maithili converb *-ka/ke* is not derived from the verb stem *kar-* (infinitive *karaba*) 'to do'. As a matter of fact, diachronically, the converb *<-ka>* and the contracted form *<ka->* of the action verb *<kar->* 'do' are totally unrelated.

- E. The Modern Maithili converb *-ka* is quite akin to the Middle Maithili converb *-kahũ/-kahu*; in all likelihood, *-kahũ/-kahu* may be viewed as the logical historical antecedent of the Modern Maithili converb *-ka* or *-ke*.
- F. If the date of composition of Vidyāpati's *Kīrttilatā* is truly A.D.1406 as claimed by Ramanath Jha 1972:26, then it can be safely asserted that the first attested use of the *k*-form converb, i.e. *-kahũ/-kahu*, in Maithili was made in 1406.
- G. As the *k*-form of the converb is totally unavailable in Vidyāpati's *Kīrttipatākā*, it may be surmised that *Kīrttipatākā* was indeed written earlier than *Kīrttilatā*, and that in all probability *Kīrttilatā* is not the first work of Vidyāpati as is commonly believed.
- H. During the diachronic development of Maithili, a curious historical fact is observed. It is noticed that the morphs used as converbal affixes in Old Maithili are used as phonological changes during stem alternations upon addition of *k*-forms of converbs in Middle and Modern Maithili non-finite verb stems. Needless to say that the phonological rules remain the same, i.e. *-i* and *-e* are inserted in consonant-ending and vowel-ending verb stems, respectively (for more details, see Yadav 2001). Examples:

Old Maithili (circa 9th to 16th centuries)

- 10. *duh-i* 'having milked' (Kvaerne ed. 1977: 66)
- 11. *lāgh-i* 'having crossed over' (Govind Jha ed. 1992: 50)

Middle Maithili (circa 17th to 18th centuries)

- 12. *dekh-i kahu* 'having seen' (Brinkhaus ed. 1987: 198)
- 13. *caḍh-i kahũ* 'having climbed' (Grierson ed. 1882b: 150)
- 14. *la-ya kahu* 'having taken' (J. Mishra ed. 1965: 17)
- 15. *pathā-e kahu* 'having sent' (L. Mishra ed. 1972: 11)

Modern Maithili (19th to 21st centuries)

- 16. *pīb-i ke*⁴ 'having drunk' (Grierson ed. 1885: 640)
- 17. *kṣarap-i ke* 'having jumped' (Grierson ed. 1885: 651)
- 18. *l-e ke* 'having taken' (Grierson ed. 1885: 636)

19. o *hās-i-ka* bajalāha 'he spoke smilingly'
20. āi-kālhi adhikatarā peṭa *cīr-i-ka* baccā paīdā kaela jāita achi 'These days, most children are born by caesarian operation'
21. o dabāi *khā-(e)-ka* nīka bhelāha 'He recuperated after taking medicine'
22. kitāba *da-(e)-ka* jāeba 'Please go after having given (back) the book (to me).'

- I. The present historical linguistic analysis of Maithili converbs may offer fresh linguistic evidence for as well as incisive insights into the acts of division of the Maithili language and literature into such periods as Old, Middle, and Modern Maithili. Needless to say, the current practice of using such labels as Old Maithili, Middle Maithili, and Modern Maithili is at its best tentative and speculative.
- J. Finally, one further benefit that may accrue from the present historical linguistic analysis of Maithili converbs is that linguists of any persuasion may fruitfully utilize the Maithili data to carry out a pan-Indo-Aryan typological study of converbs in Indo-Aryan languages.

Notes

1. It deserves to be noted that converbs in *-i* and *-iā* are not unique to Maithili. Converbs in *-i* are also a feature of regional Bengali and underlie the Sādhu Bhāṣā Bengali forms. Remnant of the older verb form *-i* is also evidenced in Nepali, e.g.
phūlcokī-bāṭa ek lākh *phūl-harū* *lyā-ī*
phūlcokī-ABL 100,000 flower-P bring-SEQ[CONV]
lyoti-lāī caṭh-ā-ī...
 light-OBJ proceed-CAUS-SEQ[CONV]
 'Bringing 100,000 flowers from Phūlcokī and offering them up to the light...(Peterson 2002, 105-106)

Converbal forms in *-iā* are a standard feature of Sādhu Bhāṣā Bengali and also occur in written texts of most conservative and respected writers, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterji and R. Tagore, as quoted in Klaiman (1983:141):

ghare brisṭi prabes kariyaa jal bosiyaache
 room-L rain entrance do-CP water has-sat

'The rain having come into the room, water accumulated' (Bankim Chandra Chatterji, *Racanābalī* v. 2, Calcutta 1954:60)

raannaagharer paase praacir bhaangiyaa katokgulo
kitchen-G beside wall break-up some
īl jaro haiyaa aache
brick piled-up become-CP are

'Beside the kitchen, a wall having broken, some bricks are piled up' (R. Tagore, *Galpaguccha*, Calcutta 1954:165)

2. *k*- forms of converbs are also evidenced marginally in Nepali and extensively in Hindi-Urdu, e.g.

Nepali: ma khā-ī-kana ga-ē
I eat-CONV go-PST-1

'I went after eating' [lit: 'I went after having eaten']

Hindi-Urdu: usne nahaa kar khaanaa nahī khaayaa (Kachru 1981:42)
he ag bathe CP meal not ate
'He didn't eat his meal after bathing'

3. *-e* form converbs in consonant final verb stems (and *-ye* form converbs in vowel final verb forms) are also a dominant characteristic of Modern Bengali, e.g.

se baari giye kaapor cheṛe caan korio
he house go-CP clothes leave-CP bath did

'he went home, took off his clothes, and had a bath'

osudh kheyē Jodur phal holo
medicine eat-CP Jodu-G benefit became

'Jodu was benefited by taking medicine'

lu lege se maaraa gaelo
heatstroke affect-CP he died

'He got heatstroke and died' (Klaiman 1983:138)

4. Variants of *k*-forms of converbs realized as *-ke* are also evidenced in regional Hindi, e.g.

daurke jāo varnā nārāz hūgā
Go quickly [lit: 'run and go'] or I will be annoyed

(Alice Davison 1986:2, as quoted in Masica 1991:399)

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WHEN FOLK CULTURE MET PRINT CULTURE: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE COMMERCIALISATION, TRANSFORMATION AND PROPAGATION OF TRADITIONAL GENRES IN NEPALI¹

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Introduction

At first glance, print culture may appear to be the antithesis of folk culture. After all, print culture depends on industrial and economic structures far removed from the simple village culture which the term 'folk' tends to invoke. But perhaps the disjunction between folk and print is not as great as it first seems. Perhaps, more pertinently, any perceived gap is conditioned by our understanding of English concepts which do not necessarily equate to local cultural understandings.

This article examines some of the dynamics of the interaction between folk culture and early Nepali print culture, primarily as the latter rapidly developed in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. It proposes we should start such a study by comparing 'folk' to its widely adopted Sanskrit-origin counterpart *lok*. It is often assumed that the translation of, say, 'folk culture' as *lok-saṃskṛti* is an unproblematic process representing conceptual equivalence. But it seems to me highly problematic: *lok* bears a very different range of connotations to 'folk', and our interpretation of *lok-saṃskṛti*, *lok-sāhitya*, etc. should be informed by an awareness of these connotations.

The first section of this article therefore examines in some detail the origin and meanings of *lok*, and the importance of its various significations for re-examining local patterns of cultural categorisation. The second section investigates Nepali folk culture as an object of study and as a commodity: it traces the origins of the self-conscious study of folk traditions by Nepali writers, and then analyses the influence of print on the interpretation, presentation and marketing of folk culture from an early stage. The third section looks at the same processes from the reverse angle: the influence of folk culture on shaping the wider world of Nepali print in its formative

decades. This study of the collision of folk traditions with the technology and commercial practices of modern print-capitalism is centred on Banaras, the birthplace of the Nepali publishing industry.²

The article demonstrates that, as one might expect, folk culture was transformed when it was rendered into printed format for commercial purposes. More interestingly, it suggests that folk traditions exerted significant influence on the way the economics of the Nepali literary system were moulded. The article concludes that print culture should not be seen as the antithesis of folk culture: in many ways it was, in fact, the apotheosis of *lok-sumskṛti*.

Folk and lok: rethinking cultural categories

Although *lok* is the universally adopted translation for 'folk' in Nepali, as well as most other New Indo-Aryan (NIA) languages, its range of meanings are quite distinct and worthy of consideration. Without such consideration we run the risk of assuming that *lok* culture in Nepal is understood and valorised in the same way as folk culture is in the English-speaking world. This would be a serious misunderstanding, as the discussion below illustrates. Equating *lok* with folk also leads to problems in the interpretation of the relationship between Nepali folk culture and print culture, the meeting of which forms the main subject of this article.

The suggestion that 'folk' and *lok* should not be seen as precise equivalents is hardly novel: Cūḍā Maṇi Bandhu opens his major recent survey *Nepālī loksāhitya* (2001/02) with a lengthy discussion of the contrasts between 'folklore' and *loksāhitya*. However, while his analysis will not offer surprises to a thoughtful researcher familiar with both English and Nepali, the folk/*lok* disjunction has perhaps not received as much attention in writing in English on Nepali as it deserves.

Let us start by reminding ourselves of the main sense of 'folk'. While its primary meaning is 'people in general', the definition—as a modifier—most relevant to the academic study of folk traditions is 'originating from the beliefs and customs of ordinary people'. Similarly 'folklore' is 'the traditional beliefs and customs of a community, passed on by word of mouth' and a 'folk tale' is 'a traditional story originally transmitted orally' (Pearsall 1999: 550-51). The word 'folk' itself has a folk origin inasmuch as it is of Germanic origin and made its way into Old English (as *folc*) at an early stage, as also did 'lore' (OE *lār*). In this respect, we may observe that both of these terms are more deeply embedded in common English than the more recent, Latinate 'culture' and 'literature'.

The central essence of 'folk', we may conclude, is that—in contradistinction to 'high' culture—its origins lie in the beliefs and customs

of 'ordinary people' and folklore or folk culture is normally transmitted orally. What then of the origins of *lok*? The different heritage of this term is obvious from the moment we consider its source: as an established part of the vocabulary of classical Sanskrit, its usage has historically been associated with high culture and sophisticated written traditions from a much earlier stage than 'folk'.³ In the *Vedas* the basic sense of *lok* (correctly *lok*, but let us use a transliteration that represents its current pronunciation) was 'free or open space, room, place, scope, free motion'. However, it then gained more specific and enduring meaning as 'world' (in the *Atharvaveda*, certain *Brāhmaṇas* and onwards). Classical texts generally enumerate three worlds: heaven, earth, and the atmosphere or lower regions, among which sometimes only the first two are mentioned; a fuller classification gives seven worlds (Monier-Williams 1899).

By the time of the composition of the *Mahābhārata*, *lok* had acquired the key connotations which remain pertinent to its deployment today: as 'the earth or world of human beings', 'the inhabitants of the world, mankind, folk, people (sometimes opposed to 'king'))', and more generally as 'ordinary life, worldly affairs, common practice or usage'. Thus the Sanskrit locative case *lok* came to be used as 'in ordinary life', 'in worldly matters', or 'in common language, in popular speech'. Here—and this, for us, offers the first clear pointer as to the distinction within Indian tradition between *lok* culture and its 'high culture' counterparts—*loke* stands in contrast to either *vede* 'in *veda*' or *chandasī* 'in [metric] verse', which could refer to incantation-hymns in general or to the *Vedas*, especially the *Atharvaveda*.

In other words, even at an early stage of the development of classical Sanskrit literature, there was a reasonably clear understanding of the separate sphere of *lok* culture. In particular, we may conveniently focus on the sense of 'worldliness' that underlies all of the central meanings of *lok* in classical Sanskrit. Just as in English, this 'worldliness' implied a direct link to the temporal rather than the spiritual: what took place in the *lok* was the affairs of human beings within their own communities rather than the affairs of gods; discourse that took place in *lok* language was divorced from that conducted in the *devavāṇī* of Sanskrit. These themes are echoed in current Nepali usage of *lok*. Certain compound words developed in classical Sanskrit are also indicative of the areas which would later overlap with the usage of *lok* as an equivalent for 'folk': *lokakathā* 'a popular legend or fable', *lokagāthā* 'a verse or song (handed down orally) among men', *lokapravāda* 'popular talk, common saying, commonly used expression'.

So far, we can see that while the traditional connotations of *lok* overlap at certain points with 'folk', its reference tends to be both much wider than the English term and also generally lacking in the pejorative associations that

colour English phrases such as 'folk etymology', where 'folk' is reduced to the opposite of 'scientific' or 'rational'.⁴ What then of the changing significations of *lok* within modern languages? Can we trace the development of new patterns of meaning built on top of this Sanskrit base? We may start with some continuities: insofar as many NIA languages use *lok* as a *tatsama* (unchanged) Sanskrit loanword, its primary sense of 'world' or 'people' is retained. In this sense, and in this form, it is used in current Bengali as the standard word for 'people'. The *log* of Hindi demonstrates in two ways its deep embeddedness in modern language: both in its ubiquity (without *log* it would be impossible to make the plural pronoun forms *tum log* and *āp log*) and in the fact that its current form in -g indicates its continuous heritage from Sanskrit through Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa to the present day. In these languages, the wider connotation of *lok* is retained in its very general application to 'people' at large.

Nepali presents a slightly different case in that *lok* on its own is not a common feature of everyday vocabulary. It is, however, the basis for several well-known compounds which helpfully illustrate its contemporary range of meaning. The sense of *lok* standing for society at large is evident in *lokpriya* 'popular', while it stands as an official equivalent to 'public' in the civil service Lok Sevā Āyog 'Public Service Commission'. Similarly, *loktantra* stands alongside *prajātantra* as a translation of 'democracy' (a sense even more prominent in India, where the Lok Sabhā is the lower house of parliament, and where *lok-nirmāṇ* can describe public works in governmental language). More broadly, *lok-mat* can be used for 'public opinion' and *lok-hit* for 'general well-being' or 'the public good'. In all of these instances we can see that *lok* could *not* be represented in English by 'folk', and here the continuing disjunction between the terms should be most apparent.

It is only with reference to particular forms of folk culture that the folk/*lok* equivalence can be maintained, and this may be largely attributed to the way in which *lok* became the bearer for a new signification that was introduced into South Asian thought and languages from the English 'folk'.⁴ The next section examines how, in the case of Nepali, the conscious study of popular traditions as 'folk' may have taken root, and how folk culture then became both an object of study for researchers and a commodity to be traded in the print market. The fourth section then investigates aspects of the emergence of a Nepali form of print-capitalism and asks if it can be read as a development of *lok-saṃskṛti* in the sense of 'popular culture' which the Nepali term most naturally suggests.

Folk culture as an object of study and as a commodity

संसारको प्रत्येक जातिमा आफ्नो रीति धर्म, सामाजिक र सानयिक प्रथा सम्बन्धी दन्तकथाहरू हुन्छन् । हाम्रो समाजमा पनि यसता गल्फ कथाहरू अनेक छन् । बङ्गाली समाजमा प्रचलित भएका यसता कथाहरूको संग्रह गरी लाल बिहारी देले *Folk Tales of Bengal* लेखे । अङ्ग्रेजीमा स्काट आदि गल्फ लेखकहरूले यसता अनेक पुस्तक लेखेका छन् । लेपचा भाषामा पनि यसता गल्फको यौटा पुस्तक तैयार गरी बङ्गाल एसियाटिक सोसाइटीले छापि प्रकाश गरेको छ । आदर्शका प्रेमी पाठकहरूले आफूले जानेका वा सुनेका यसता कथाहरू नेपाली भाषामा लेखेर हाम्रो अफिसमा पठाउने कृपा गर्नु भए समयमा यसता कथाहरूको संग्रह गरी यौटा असल लाभदायक पुस्तक प्रकाश गर्ने चेष्टा गर्ने छौं ।

Every jāti in the world has its own oral stories about its customs and manners, social and periodic institutions (sāmājik ra sāmāyik prathā sambandhī). In our society there are many such stories. Having collected such stories current in Bengali society Lāl Bihārī De wrote Folk Tales of Bengal. In English, story-writers such as Scott have written many such books. The Bengal Asiatic Society has also prepared a book of such stories in the Lepcha language and published it. If the loving readers of Ādarśa would be kind enough to write in Nepali such stories that they know or have heard and send them to our office we shall try in time to make a collection of such stories and publish a good and worthwhile book.

Editorial comment, *Ādarśa* 1(3): 38, 1930

At first glance, it may appear that a conscious Nepali interest in folk tales, and in folk culture at large, dates to no earlier than the 1930s. Certainly, Kalimpong-based *Ādarśa* editor Śeṣ Maṇi Pradhān's note cited above is the first explicit call to make folk culture the object of concerted study and recording of which I am aware. Similarly, Bandhu (2001/02) identifies the *Dantyakathā* compiled by Bodhvikram Adhikārī in 1939/40 as the first true collection of folk tales, which he specifies as 'folk stories that are current in popular usage (*lokvyavahārmā pracalit lokkathāharū*)'. Adhikārī's work appeared only shortly before the publication of the most extensive—and probably best remembered—early effort towards investigating and compiling Nepali sayings and popular usage, Puṣkar Śarmā's two-volume encyclopaedia *Nepālī ukhān, ṭukkā, vākyāṁśa, vākyapaddhati, ityādiko koṣ* (1941/42).

However, an active interest in what would later be termed 'folk' traditions, can be traced to a much earlier period. Starting with Motīrām Bhaṭṭa (1866-1896), some writers had researched Nepali proverbs, demonstrating the links between folk inspiration and printable literature.

Bhaṭṭa, who remains best known as the biographer and publisher of Nepali's *ādikavi* ('first poet') Bhānubhakta Ācārya, compiled a collection of proverbs entitled *Ukhānko bakhān*, which was published in Banaras by Rām Kṛṣṇa Khatrī at the end of 1894. The official statements of publications from India's United Provinces (into which the principal Nepali publishing centre Banaras fell) also record the publication of a book entitled *Muhā okhān bakhān* in 1897. This was attributed to a certain Badrī Nārāyaṇ and published by Banaras's Hitacintak Press, which was responsible for the production of many early Nepali books. It is not clear if any copies of Badrī Nārāyaṇ's book have survived but the title suggests that it could be a version of Motīrām's *Ukhānko bakhān*. Such a suggestion also reflects the commercial environment of early Nepali publishing: successful works were frequently copied without permission by other authors and publishers, and it would not be surprising if an unscrupulous rival had taken the opportunity of Motīrām's untimely death to bring out an unauthorised version of his work. In any case, the appearance of these two books within three years of each other surely indicates that there existed a market for this type of 'folk' tradition compilation: both titles had print runs of 1,000.⁵

Meanwhile, the interest in proverbs and their reflection of colloquial expression had spread to Darjeeling, where the pioneering publisher Gaṅgāprasād Pradhān was also infected with an enthusiasm for collecting folk sayings. Gaṅgāprasād, the son of a former palace gatekeeper in Kathmandu who had run away from his new home on a Darjeeling tea estate to have himself baptised a Christian in Allahabad, became the first ordained Nepali priest and the proprietor of the Gorkha Press. From 1901 to 1930 he produced the *Gorkhe Khabar Kāgat*, by far the longest-lived Nepali periodical in pre-Independence India. His own compilation of 1,438 sayings was published in 1908; although they represented the mixed heritage of Darjeeling's population, the vast majority of whom had migrated there within the last couple of generations, he described them as 'pure Nepali proverbs' (Pradhan 1908). Very few copies of this book—which Gaṅgāprasād researched, printed and published himself—have survived but Salon Kārthak's recent biography of Gaṅgāprasād reproduces one sample proverb for each letter of the alphabet (2001: 100-04; in the original work the proverbs were arranged alphabetically by first letter).⁶ Less than a decade later, Kājī Mahāvīr Siṃh Garataulā Kṣatrī contributed a slimmer and less well organised collection of popular sayings (*Ukhān bakhānko pravāha*, 1917) which, despite claiming to be author-published, was produced in 500 copies by one of the leading Nepali publishing houses in Banaras, that of Viśvarāj and Harihar Śarmā.

The purpose of presenting these details is to demonstrate that even if the explicit recognition of folk culture *per se* as a topic worthy of study by Nepali

writers may not be seen until 1930 or thereabouts, in practice elements of folk expression were evident from the earliest stages of the development of Nepali print. And while the collection of proverbs is the clearest indication of a deliberate *research* approach to folk issues, I would suggest that their centrality to the emergence of Nepali *narrative* forms in print is of much greater significance. Narrative, in fact, was the primary concern of the essay by Rūpnārāyaṇ Siṃh that prompted Pradhān's comments in *Ādarśa*. Siṃh was one of the most talented and creative Nepalis of his generation, and even now is well remembered as the author of one of the most important early Nepali novels, *Bhramar*. In 1930 he had graduated with a BA and was based in Calcutta; he would go on to become a senior lawyer and a leading light of Calcutta high society, famed for his dashing good looks and the womanising which formed the semi-autobiographical background to *Bhramar* ('The Bumble-bee'; the title alluding to the metaphor of a bee which feeds on many flowers, flying from one to another and never settling). The aim of his article in *Ādarśa* was to highlight the paucity of inventive narratives in Nepali, in either the novel or short story genres. In his consideration of the latter, his choice of word, *galpa*, indicates that he was considerably influenced by the achievements of Bengali literature (1930: 38): 'There is an absence in Nepali literature of both novels and stories. There is not a single noteworthy novel. As for the word *galpa*, it is still hardly heard or understood in the vernacular.'

But again, we should be cautious in taking his insistence on the 'absence' of narrative genres at face value: for example, Bandhu (2001/02: 294) dates the highly influential and much reproduced prose narrative *Vīrsikkā* to 1889/90 and includes it among works that are related to folk stories. We may rather interpret Siṃh's statement as specifically bemoaning the lack of tales that had clearly moved beyond those of folk origins. For there had been a flourishing market for Nepali novels, stories and poetry for more than three decades: in fact, as the next section aims to illustrate, it was reworked folk formats such as *Vīrsikkā* that provided the main platform for the Nepali publishing business, which in turn enabled the production and distribution of more refined literature through the infrastructure thus established.

How, then, did the advent of print as a technology and business influence folk culture? The foregoing paragraphs have already hinted at the change in the *interpretation* of folk formats as they came to be consciously distinguished as 'folk' or *lok* and contrasted to an implicit 'non-folk' modernity. Let us now look at a couple of examples of how print brought changes to the *presentation* of folk genres, and how this consequently spurred new styles of writing (and, of course, reading). By presentation, I have in mind all the steps required to bring folk formats into printed format, including composition, distribution and marketing.

First, we may note that the relationship between folk culture and high culture was a complex one even before the arrival of print. To take a prominent example, the *Rāmāyaṇa* was, as a Sanskrit epic poem with many written recensions, distinctly representative of sophisticated literary culture. Yet it also spawned numerous folk interpretations, both within Nepal and throughout South and South-east Asia (cf. Richman 1991). The fame of Tulsīdās's *Rāmcaritmānas* throughout north India rested on the ready intelligibility of his Avadhī language and his adoption of the popular *dohā* and *caupāī* verse formats. Similarly in Nepali, episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* had, long before Bhānubhakta's fuller literary rendition, been rendered into the form of *bāluns*, a form of folk drama popular among Brāhmaṇs and Chetrīs of Nepal's central hills. Such dramas would have been performed relatively informally at the village level but with the arrival of print they both took on a permanent form—what at that time Hindi literary critics would describe as *sthāyī*—and gained a potentially much wider audience than the original dramas themselves. For example, Pūrṇānanda Upādhyāya's *Rāmāyanako bālun* (published in Banaras in 1912 by Viśvarāj Harihar) gave print-permanence to one particular version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* tale.⁷ Other *bāluns* that were transformed into print in the early twentieth century included parts of the *Mahābhārata* and tales of the incarnations of Viṣṇu.

While Bhānubhakta's *Rāmāyaṇa* (which was a great commercial as well as literary success) may have promoted a relatively homogeneous devotional culture, the simultaneous circulation of a variety of divergent folk traditions must have acted as a reminder of the heterogeneity of cultural forms within Nepal. As such works reached new audiences they also enabled a form of print-mediated communication between different experiences and traditions.

Thus, from a starting point quite far removed from the religious narratives of the epics as they were translated into *bāluns*, the *savāī* form of popular verse developed into a versatile print medium for the recitation of tales from distant battlefronts, of historical characters or events. Like most popular genres, *savāīs* have not received much scholarly attention: while Bandhu praises many *savāī* poems for their liveliness (2001/02: 215) he observes that 'as published *savāīs* ... were confined to the little educated, the assessment of Nepali *savāī* literature can for now be only based on estimation.' *Savāīs*, which may be most conveniently glossed as narrative folk-poetry, entered the printed market themselves and then, perhaps more significantly, offered many writers who would otherwise never have had the opportunity to produce printable works an entry to the burgeoning Nepali literary bazaar.

This genre was produced commercially in Banaras but, probably more than any other type of literature, drew in a wide range of authors and readers: this ethnic and geographic diversity certainly owed much to the medium's

popularity among soldiers.⁸ Early contributions from India's north-east included Tulācan Ale's *Maṇipurko savāī* (1896); Dhanvīr Bhaṇḍārī's *Abbar pahāḍko savāī* (1894); and *Bhuīmcaloko savāī* (1897). Ḍākmān Thuluṅg Rāī's *savāī* account of the 1899 Darjeeling landslide (Pradhān 1982: 100) probably made him the first Kirat writer in Nepali to be widely read. Yet this genre managed to embrace more subjects than the historical or martial. The collection *Savāī pacīsā* (1914), published in Banaras by Viśvarāj Harihar, merited a print run of 1,000 copies despite its potentially prohibitive cost of two-and-a-half rupees.

Works such as this indicate the ease with which a popular format was adopted and commercialised by Banaras publishers. As with *savāīs* of the Shillong earthquake, Viśvarāj Harihar's main rival Padmaprasād Upādhyāya also added Jaṅgabīr's (1916) description of the 1899 Darjeeling landslide to his catalogue. That this tale of the heroism of Gurkha soldiers in their rescue efforts should become a vehicle for the profit of a mercenary entrepreneur is indicative of the ambivalent relations that characterised the emergent Nepali print-capitalism. The publishing infrastructure developed in Banaras offered new outlets for *savāī* literature and promised to bring these verses to a wide audience in a convenient, and generally affordable format. In doing this they also elevated folk-style rhyming tales to a form of *sthāyī* printed literature. The composer of a successful *savāī* could hope for some fame and increased literary respectability; yet for a publisher such as Padmaprasād, the most important verses were surely the rhyming couplets on the back cover that he hoped would carry the message of his wondrous Mahakali oil and other products to new markets. Meanwhile, we can observe with the commercialisation of this genre an interesting tension: members of historically non-Nepali-speaking, working/soldiering classes were being offered entry into an arena that had previously been closed to them; nevertheless, the major beneficiaries remained confined to a small circle of Banaras-based Brāhmins.

The patterns that can be observed in the adaptation of *savāī* verse to book format are echoed in other genres. A further tension in the deployment of folk formats in print came into focus with the development of Nepali literary criticism. For example, the most widespread early use of the immensely popular *jhyāure* folksong rhythm was in mildly erotic *śṛṅgār* poetry. The flavour given by the *jhyāure* rhythm surely contributed to the remarkable success of cheap romantic works in this genre: they sold in the tens of thousands and seemingly appealed to a very diverse audience. Books such as these made publishing in Nepali commercially viable but they also incurred critical disdain and moral censure. Such attitudes were no doubt largely informed by the growing consensus among the self-appointed guardians of

high class literature that writing had to be socially useful and preferably morally improving, a viewpoint common among Hindi critics which had become well entrenched by the time it was institutionalised in Rāmcandra Śukla's seminal *Hindī sāhitya kā itihās* (1940). It was when *jhyāure* was exploited to help convey an approved message, such as in Mahānanda Sāpkoṭā's reformist *Man-lahurī* (1923), that it was most appreciated by contemporary and subsequent critics.

We may conclude that the decades around the turn of the twentieth century witnessed both the birth of the modern Nepali publishing industry and the extensive remoulding of traditional folk forms into new printed books. The few specific illustrations presented above offer only a glimpse of the mass of works which drew on folk genres and contributed to their reformulation. By the later part of the period examined, writers had started to treat 'folk' or *lok* culture consciously as an object of study in its own right but it is clear that the interest in investigating and representing folk traditions dates back to near the beginning of Nepali print culture. We have seen that the use of folk was not entirely unproblematic but rather reflected various tensions inherent in the nascent literary system: between creativity and profit, the local and the universal, and between popular success and critical esteem.

Print culture as *lok* culture

The foregoing section has aimed primarily to sketch some of the ways in which the process of transfer of folk genres from local, oral traditions to printed and widely distributed formats affected their form and their role in society. But how can we assess the influence of folk culture on shaping the wider world of Nepali print? The collision of Nepali folk traditions with the technology and commercial practices of modern print-capitalism, centred on Banaras, had a double-edged impact on both elements in the equation. Folk may have been transformed as it was remoulded into printed output but it also exerted a major influence in shaping the economics of the modern Nepali literary system as a whole. In short, without folk literature as a base to draw on and from which to revise and improvise, it would have been difficult for the Nepali literary system as a whole to establish itself as a viable print business.

In the early decades of Nepali publishing, perhaps even the majority of titles (excluding widely-circulating textbooks) had their origins in popular and folk genres. Certainly the volume of 'high' literature—such as, say, Lekhnāth Pauḍyāl's *Rtu vicār* (published in Nepal by Kulcandra Gautam in 1917) or Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā's *Naivedya* (published in Banaras by Maṇi Simh Gurun in 1920)—was remarkably small in comparison to popular styles such as the *bāluns* and *savāīs* discussed above. Were it not for the commercial success of

such works, there would have been neither the developed infrastructure to publish more sophisticated creations nor the means to distribute them, nor indeed such a sizeable market for them. Yet folk traditions have often been neglected by mainstream literary historians, except when they have directly influenced written styles. Tārānāth Śarmā's influential *Nepālī sāhityako itihās* (1994/95), for example, gives no space to folk traditions. The influence of popular song is acknowledged when its rhythms enter mainstream poetry but its intrinsic value is downplayed. Thus Lakṣmīprasād Devkoṭā's use of *jhyāure* in *Munū-Mudan* has generally received rapturous critical applause but many of the earlier published *jhyāure* verses have slipped into obscurity, despite the fact that they surely entertained thousands of people and played a crucial role in the spread of the Nepali language (cf. Bandhu 1989).

Here we can see the convenience of thinking in terms of *lok* rather than 'folk'. For whatever the folk origins of much of the material that bulked out Nepali publishers' catalogues and filled up their balance sheets, it was their *laukik* (worldly) functions that guaranteed their place at the heart of the new industry. Unlike the traditions of, say, the oral transmission of the *vedas* within priestly lineages or the *sumasyāpūrti* competitions at *kavi sammelan* gatherings, print technology was fundamentally implicated in the worldly matters that are bound up in the term *lok* itself. Moreover, it was the fact that print offered a new means of reaching out to the 'world at large', to communities of Nepalis of various backgrounds and classes spread out across Nepal, India and beyond, that enabled it to reformulate local 'folk' traditions into books that catered to the much wider *lok* of all literate Nepalis. Indeed, print culture was not even confined to the reading public, because in many areas it provided new materials for storytelling and recitation that bridged the gap between textual and oral transmission.

The temporal force of *lok* is also evident in the way that popular publishing brought access to hitherto restricted religious knowledge into the public domain. With the translation of texts from the *devavānī* of Sanskrit and their presentation to people in the *lokbhāṣā* (vernacular) they understood age-old barriers around esoteric knowledge started to erode. The outpouring of tales from the *purāṇas*, the epics and even some of the *vedas* may have contributed to the propagation of normative religious values but they also brought about a minor revolution comparable to that occasioned in Europe by the translation of the Bible. The medium of print also became a powerful channel for the dissemination of reformist messages, from the radical poets of the Josmanī Sant tradition in eastern Nepal and the Ārya Ṣamājī doctrine promoted by Mādhavrāj Joṣī and Śukrarāj Śāstrī to the later Theravāda Buddhist revival which was intimately connected to the elaboration of a modern Newar social and cultural consciousness. Many of these significant

developments were at most only tangentially related to folk traditions but were very much *lok*-related.

The most lasting legacy of the early period of Nepali print culture is, finally, the most emphatically *lok*-centred. It was only as the wider public came to be identified with a cohesive sense of *jāti* belonging that the *lok-samskṛti* of print began speaking to a proto-nationalist Nepali community. The awareness of a potential supra-ethnic Nepali *jāṭiyatā* (loosely speaking, nationhood) and concerted efforts towards its definition and development were inalienably linked to the new communicative technology of print and the wide discursive potential it enabled. *Jāti* consciousness was at the heart of much Nepali writing of the early twentieth century and lay at the heart of the rhetorical and practical commitments to *unnati* (progress, advancement) which preoccupied almost all social thinkers, writers and activists. Insofar as the audience for popular publications thus came to overlap with the nascent 'Nepali *jāti*', the new *lok* represented 'the people', in a way comparable to the German *Volk*, or the Russian equation of folk culture with *narodnaia* ('national') culture.

The cultural aspects of folk culture formed the basis for the elaboration of *jāṭiyatā* in both literary terms and as a practical means for reaching out to disparate members of an undeniably heterogeneous population. It was to folk culture that influential writers such as Sūryavikram looked when seeking to define the essence of that which was specifically Nepali. Introducing his new edition of Motīrām's renowned biography of Bhānubhakta, Sūryavikram devoted a full page (Bhaṭṭa 1927: 3-4) to the need to revive and make use of Nepali's *jāṭīya chanda* (national/ethnic metres), especially *savārī*. He praised Dharaṇīdhar Koirālā for his devotion to producing natural Nepali poetry but urged other poets to work hard to revive the *jāṭīya chandas*. Sūryavikram believed that a distinctive Nepaliness could be found in *jāti* heritage but the role of modern litterateurs was to refine it.

In this way, the folk resources of Nepali proverbs, local verse formats and song styles were welded to a much wider proto-nationalist project in which the symbolic value of their nativeness was used to support an emerging *jāti* identity. This project was in a certain sense the summation of *lok* culture, for it deployed lengthy folk traditions within the new framework of print technology to create a modern concept of shared popular culture and common *jāti* belonging. When thought of in English, the meeting of folk with print seems to be a clash of cultures. The formative Nepali experience suggests, however, that both were essential to the birth of a novel type of *lok samskṛti* whose impact is still felt today.

Notes

1. This article is based on a paper presented at the 2nd International Folklore Congress, Kathmandu, May 30 - June 1, 2003. I am grateful to Tulsi Diwas and Professor Chura Mani Bandhu for their invitation to present a paper at this congress, and also to the participants who offered comments and suggestions.
2. Many of the materials drawn on for this brief article are presented at more length in Chalmers (2002), which also provides a more thorough analysis of the development of Nepali print-capitalism in general. The wider historical analysis within which this study of folk and print may be located—broadly speaking, the emergence and development of Nepali social consciousness within the public sphere of the early twentieth century—is the subject of Chalmers (2003).
3. The Sanskrit verbal root *lok* 'to see, behold, perceive' is included in the Dhātupāṭha (iv, 2) but the noun *lok* took some time to settle into its current form: 'connected with *roka*; in the oldest texts *loka* is generally preceded by *u*, which according to the Padap.= the particle 3. *u*; but *u* may be a prefixed vowel and *ulok* a collateral dialectic form of *loka*; according to others *u-loka* is abridged from *uru-* or *ava-loka*' (Monier-Williams 1899: 906).
4. In fact, the English usage of 'folk' has had a wide influence in other European languages, and the English term itself has often been loaned to offer the specific sense implied in 'folklore', etc. While German and Dutch make use of the cognate *Volk/volk* (thus German *Volkstanz* 'folk dance' or *Volkssage* 'folk tale', Dutch *volkslied* 'folk song'), French has adopted *folk* as both a noun and an adjective (thus *chanson folk* 'folk song'), as well as the terms *le folklore* and *folklorique*. Russian has similarly loaned *fol'klor* and *fol'klorist* but uses *narodnyi* 'national' as the modifier: *narodnaia muzyka* 'folk/national music', *narodnaia pesnia* 'folk/national song'. (It seems that the artificial European language Esperanto tends towards the wider sense of 'folk' as people at large, hence *popolo* 'folk', *popolkanto*, 'folk song'.)
5. I have only been able to have a brief glance at one surviving copy of Gaṅgā prasad's collection of proverbs held in a private collection in Darjeeling.
6. While Parājulī (2001/02: 15-16), probably the most authoritative recent writer on Nepali proverbs, cites the work of Motīrām, Gaṅgāprasād and Gartaulā, he makes no mention of Badrī Nārāyaṇ.
7. Bandhu (2001/02b: 278-80) provides an interesting description of *bālun* performance but does not discuss published versions.
8. The *savāī* remains a popular format. Kamal Dixit recently published retired soldier Puṇyabahādur Thāpākṣetrī's 328-verse *Sṛṣṭiko savāī* (2001/02) with an enthusiastic preface.

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A METHOD FOR ESTIMATING INFANT MORTALITY RATE FOR NEPAL

Shambhu Prasad Patel

Introduction

Infant mortality rate (IMR) is an important indicator of social development of a nation. It is widely used for assessing socio-economic and health situation in developing countries (Chandra Sekhar 1972: 77; Jain and Visaria 1988). Measurement is a fundamental aspect of research in the area of infant mortality. If vital registration is complete, IMR for each year can be calculated in the conventional manner directly from the system's data (Hill 1991:369). Unfortunately, complete vital registration system is practically non-existent in Nepal (Karki 1989). In the absence of complete vital registration system, indirect techniques proposed by Brass (1964), Trussell (1975), Feeney (1980), and Palloni and Heligman (1986) have been used for estimating IMR for Nepal using the census or survey data.

The estimation of IMR by these techniques needs accurate birth history data to be collected from census or survey; reliable and adequate age patterns of child mortality for selecting an appropriate method and model life table; and lastly, many assumptions to be satisfied by the population under study. But the irony is that the birth and death data collected from the censuses or surveys of Nepal are highly inaccurate (Radhakrishna 1992:6-9; Pant 1996:1-8). Further, many assumptions underlying the models are unjustifiable in the population under study (Hill and Yazbek 1993:7). Moreover, there is no reliable age distribution of mortality for Nepal to use in deciding the right family that fits (CBS 1995:101). Apart from this, Nepal is a poor country where 42 percent of people still live below the poverty line, and almost half of the total population are unable to read or write (UNDP 2002:2).

Keeping in view the socio-economic and demographic realities of our own country, this paper presents a simple regression model for estimating IMR from the minimum relevant parameter. Crude death rate (CDR) has

been selected as the minimum relevant parameter needed for estimating IMR because it represents the 'end result' of development; can be easily obtained from either suitable models or various publications; and more importantly, it is strongly correlated with the level of IMR (Arriaga 1994). The model is applied to obtain the estimates of IMR for Nepal, and its validity is ascertained by comparing the estimated IMRs for Nepal with the other estimates available in the country; and by computing relevant tests for diagnostic checking for model adequacy.

Materials and Methods

The proposed methodology of estimation is based on simple regression approach described elsewhere (Kumar 1981; Aryal and Gautam 2001; Singh 2003). The methodology of estimation developed here follows the usual path of establishing the relationships between the dependent variable, which in this case is the IMR and the independent variable, herein identified as CDR. Several empirical studies show almost a linear relationship between IMR and CDR. Therefore, it was decided to fit a regression model of type:

$$Y = a + bX + e \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where Y = IMR (per 1000 live births); X = CDR (per 1000 population); e is a random error term; and a and b are parameters to be estimated.

The next step is to estimate the value of the parameters. For this purpose, the regression model is fitted in by using the following set of data extracted from the United Nations (1999).

**Table 1 : Estimates of CDR and IMR for Nepal used
for Fitting the Equation (1)**

Years	X (= CDR)	Y (= IMR)
1950-1955	27.9	210
1955-1960	26.7	200
1960-1965	25.0	189
1965-1970	22.8	175
1970-1975	21.1	160
1975-1980	18.4	142
1980-1985	16.2	125
1985-1990	14.1	109
1990-1995	12.8	96
1995-2000	10.9	83

Source: United Nations (1999), p. 305.

The table gives the following values of constants needed for estimating the parameters:

$$\begin{array}{lll} \Sigma X = 195.90 & \Sigma Y = 1849.00 & \Sigma XY = 31598.20 \\ \Sigma X^2 = 4163.81 & \Sigma Y^2 = 239821 & n = 10 \end{array}$$

Using these data, simple regression approach gives the following estimated regression model for computing IMR for Nepal:

$$\hat{Y} = 3.01 + 7.4470 X \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

$$n = 10, R^2 = 99.8763\%, \text{ S.E. } (\hat{Y}) = 1.7009$$

Where $\hat{Y}$ = Estimated IMR (per 1000 live births);

X = CDR (per 1000 population).

Diagnostic Checking for Model Adequacy And Discussions

A model that fails in diagnostic checking for model adequacy will always remain suspect and little faith can be put in the results (Kerlinger 1998). Therefore, it is essential that the model fitted for estimation purposes should satisfy the important tests of model adequacy. In this study, diagnostic checking for model adequacy is done by applying the model in Nepal's context; comparing the estimated IMRs for Nepal with the other estimates available for the country from different sources (Singh 1979; CBS 1987a,

1995; UNICEF 2001); and by computing relevant tests for model adequacy described elsewhere. The comparison of the estimated IMRs for Nepal with the other estimates available for the country is presented by the figures in the following table and figure:

Table 2 : Comparison of the Estimated IMRs for Nepal with other Estimates

Estimates of other sources			Present Study
Years	CDR	IMR	IMR*
1954 ⁱ	36.70	255.00	276.05
1961 ⁱⁱ	25.72	171.23	194.55
1976 ⁱⁱⁱ	22.20	134.00	168.33
1981 ⁱⁱ	17.35	131.00	132.21
1991 ^{iv}	13.30	97.00	102.02
1999 ^v	10.00	75.00	77.48

Notes: i Refers to the estimates of Baidyanathan and Gaige (1973), PP. 278-290.

ii Refers to the estimates of Singh, M.L. (1979, P. 172.

iii Refers to the estimates of CBS (1987a), P. 99.

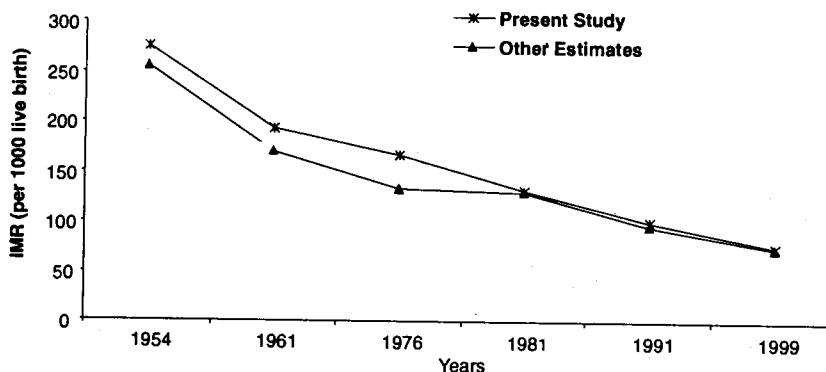
iv Refers to the estimates of CBS (1995), P. 96.

v Refers to the estimates of UNICEF (2001), P. 80

* Refers to the estimates of the present study.

Source: CBS (1987a, 1995); Singh, M.L. (1979); UNICEF (2001).

Figure 1 : Comparison of the Estimated IMRs for Nepal with other Estimates



This figure clearly shows declining trends of IMRs over the periods as is usually expected. More importantly, it shows close agreement between the estimated IMRs and the other estimates available for the country from different sources over a wide range of periods. However, it also shows a weak agreement between the estimated IMRs and other estimates especially, before 1981. This may be attributed to the limitations of data sources. In summary, the model seems to provide better estimates for more recent periods than the distant past. Diagnostic checking for model adequacy can also be done by computing major relevant tests described elsewhere.

The following table presents the results of major relevant tests computed for diagnostic checking for model adequacy:

**Table 3: Tests Computed for Diagnostic Checking
for Model Adequacy**

Tests for Model Adequacy		Results®
1. Tests for Goodness of fit:		
i. Based on coefficient of determination:	$R^2(\%)$	99.6900
	r	-0.9984
	n	8
2. S.E. of Estimates:		
	S.E. ($\hat{Y}$)	3.0188
	S.E. ($\hat{a}$)	4.4288
	S.E. ($\hat{b}$)	0.0817
3. Tests of significance:		
i. Based on 't' test:	For $\hat{a}$: $ t $	205.843
	For $\hat{b}$: $ t $	5808.738
	For r : $ t $	43.249
	Tabulated t^*	2.447
	Tabulated t^{**}	1.943
ii. Based on ANOVA and 'F' Ratio :	TSS	22801.968750
	SSR	22731.509070
	SSE	70.459680
	Calculated 'F Ratio'	1935.70
	Tabulated F^*	5.99
	Tabulated F^{**}	13.70
iii. Based on P.E. (r):	P.E. (r)	0.0011

4. D-W test for Autocorrelation:	d statistic	1.191
	ρ	0.392
	d_u^*	1.332
	d_L^*	0.763
	d_u^{**}	1.003
	d_L^{**}	0.497

- Notes: * Refers to 5% level of significance.
 ** Refers to 1% level of significance.
 @ Refers to the results of tests computed for the proposed model (2).

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is computed for testing the goodness of fit. For the given set of data, the computed value of coefficient of determination R^2 (= 98.88%) is very high which indicates goodness of fit as 99.88% of the variation in IMR among the periods appears to be explained by the variation in the CDRs. Similarly, the smaller value of computed S.E. (Y') [= 1.70] indicates the higher reliability of the model. The goodness of fit of a regression model is mostly affected by the estimated values of parameters. Similarly, the estimated parameters may be considered significant as they satisfied the 't' test. For instance, the parameter b' may be considered significant as the calculated value of $|t|$ statistic for b' is 103.358 which is greater than the tabulated values t^* (=1.306) and t^{**} (= 1.860) for $n - 2$ (= 8) degrees of freedom. This is also true for the other remaining parameters except for a' at 5 percent level of significance. Another way to test the significance of the regression model is to compute the 'F' test. The calculated value of 'F ratio' (= 6060.69) is evidently greater than the tabulated values F^* (= 5.32) and F^{**} (= 11.30) for (1, 8) degrees of freedom and therefore, the regression model may be considered significant.

The presence of autocorrelation is a serious problem and therefore, D-W test is computed for detection of autocorrelation. The results of D-W test clearly show absence of autocorrelation in the residuals because the first order autocorrelation coefficient ρ (= 0.233) is very small, and the condition: $d_u < d < 4 - d_u$ is well satisfied. For instance, d_u^* (= 1.32) $< d$ (= 1.44) $< 4 - d_u^*$ (= 2.68); and d_u^{**} (= 1.001) $< d$ (= 1.44) $< 4 - d_u^{**}$ (= 2.999) are satisfied.

Conclusions

The advantages of the indirect techniques in mortality estimation cannot be overemphasized in developing countries like Nepal. The proposed model is very simple and easy to apply; does not need census or survey data and model life tables for estimation of IMR; and gives approximately reliable estimates for Nepal. The results indicate that the model is effective in providing approximately reliable estimates of IMR for Nepal during the last few decades. The model seems to provide comparatively better estimates for more recent periods than for the distant past. However, the model seems to be affected by accuracy of data and age structure of the population under study. Conclusively, the model may be considered suitable for estimating IMR for Nepal for few more decades.

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NEPALISATION OF AN INDIAN INDUSTRY: THE FAST EVOLVING (AND DISMANTLING) READY-MADE GARMENT INDUSTRY OF NEPAL

Mallika Shakya

The exportable ready-made garment industry of Nepal is an industry suffering from two major fallacies. The first fallacy, which prevails in the policy and academic discourse, is the one that depicts it to be a shadow of the Indian garment industry. The second fallacy is the optimistic conviction of the majority of junior managers and workers as to its sustainability. These erroneous beliefs underestimate its contribution to Nepali society and disregard the serious implications the potential collapse of this industry may have for its managers, workers and society at large. Drawing on an ethnographic study of the industry, and in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders, this article aims to question the rhetoric about the garment industry of Nepal and its role in modern Nepali society.

Introduction

The exportable garment industry has been both one of the most accomplished and most vilified industries in Nepal. Still in its formative years, the industry grew very rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, which were the two decades during which the country underwent radical transformations in its political and economic (as well as social) systems. This industry has remarkable economic significance, but it is its social and political significance that make it all the more important. Its significance stems from the rapidity with which the industry grew and the dynamism with which it became sophisticated – both at a degree difficult to match at least within the country.

Since the growth of the garment industry coincided with the country's comprehensive economic liberalisation programme, much of the credit also goes to technical advice provided by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). These agencies were not involved directly in the garment industry, but

they dictated a series of radical changes in the country's economic policies, which in turn allowed the garment industry to make advances that otherwise would not have been possible. At the same time, however, the process of economic liberalisation led by the IFIs is also blamed by some for the structural insecurity and the frequent turmoil to which the industry has been vulnerable.

With this note on what I perceive to be the point of departure for this study, I outline my research questions. Collectively, these three questions seek to explain the current growth and forecast future (un)sustainability of the industry:

- (i) To what extent is the industry's growth based on internal factors as opposed to external?
- (ii) Who are the beneficiaries of its growth?
- (iii) What systematic pattern can be identified from the industry's responses to crises so far?

The methodology for this study is three-tiered. First, a detailed literature review was conducted, of all newspaper and journal articles published in major Nepali and English language publications in the past three years. This review also included the studies carried out by Garment Association of Nepal, ILO, GEFONT¹ and various other institutions. Second, owners/managers of 22 factories were interviewed following a questionnaire. The sample was a random sample and included factories of all sizes and systems. The factories' records on their finance, machinery and labour were reviewed in addition to the data derived from interviews. Third, the findings of the questionnaire survey were verified in a broader context using materials derived from extended participatory observation made of three selected garment factories during the fieldwork period of December 2002 to March 2004. The third part of the research not only gave an opportunity to consistently listen to both the managers' and workers' reasoning and explanations of various events that occurred in the industry, but also allowed the researcher to observe a series of actions actually taken by them against what they said. These three approaches collectively should enable the study to form a holistic picture, without losing its nuances and subtleties.

An Ethnic Equaliser

The Nepali exportable garment industry currently has a financial net worth of 80 million US dollars with a collective turnover of 160 million US dollars a year.² It comprises about 215 factories each employing 200 to 1500 workers, located in two conglomerated areas: the peripheries of Kathmandu and the south-eastern district of Jhapa. The country's largest foreign currency earner, the garment industry annually contributes approximately 25 per cent of Nepal's exports. During its boom year of 1994/95, about 1067 factories were registered. Several more were already operating without official registration. Its share in national exports was 49 per cent in 1999/2000, which could be attributed to the large number of factories registered in 1994/95 if we assume the full gestation period of the factory to be four years.

The garment industry occupies a moderate 2–3 per cent share in the national GDP and currently employs no more than fifty thousand people. The Garment Association of Nepal (GAN), however, estimated that in its boom years the industry employed approximately one hundred thousand workers. In addition to the size of its labour force, the core of its contribution lies in the avenues it opened up for social pioneers from marginalized ethnic groups of society. In the imperfect markets of Nepal, this is among the few industries which has offered a decent livelihood to social or ethnic groups challenged by, among others, insufficient capital, inadequate (or irrelevant) formal education, inadequate inherited vocational skills, and caste-based disadvantages. Interestingly, most of these criteria apply equally to the managers as well as the workers of the industry. Such ethnic and social contributions, in addition to economic, are what make the garment industry a very important agent for social change.

The Garment Boom and Bust

External chain of events: The garment industry is often criticised for being an industrial 'dowry' from India. Indeed, inasmuch as the capital, labour, raw materials, technology and machinery all initially came from India as a direct policy response to the US's curtailment of imports of Indian garment products this criticism contains an element of truth.

A system of item-specific quotas was imposed by the US for selected developing countries as a part of the 1974 global Multi-fibre Agreement (MFA). While three other South Asian countries—Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka—were the immediate winners in terms of quota distribution, Nepal's gains were more far-reaching. Nepal not only got the highest 'quota

per capita' in the South Asian region,³ the massive redundancy in the Indian garment industry brought about by the MFA was redirected to Nepal as its 'satellite' manufacturing unit. The garment industry in Nepal was a sector with limited promotion by local businessmen, and given that Nepal shares a 1271 km long open border with India and has often given preferential treatment to Indian capital and manpower, Nepal was the obvious choice for the large segment of the Indian garment industry that was made redundant by MFA. The Indian entrepreneurs efficiently utilized Nepal to prevail over the restrictions imposed upon them. This explains the swift growth of the industry in Nepal.

The Multi-Fibre Agreement came into existence in 1974. It was conceived as a temporary tool but it received four extensions—in 1977, 1981, 1986 and 1994—which increased its entrenchment and raised hope for a longer future. However, an agreement signed in Marrakech on 15 April, 1994, made the WTO effective from January 1, 1995. What this meant for MFA was that it was then replaced with the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC), which is committed to rid the international textile trade of any protection or regulation that is likely to undermine the free-market apparatus. A ten-member body under ATC is currently working for the abolition of MFA in four stages. Subsequently, full phase-out of existing quotas is scheduled to occur on January 1, 2005. What this means for Nepal is that it will forego the implicit cost subsidies of up to 43% (Birnbbaum 2000: 34) which had made it competitive in the global market despite its otherwise high costs of production.⁴

The leading players in international trade have regarded the MFA/ATC phase out as a non-negotiable topic, and developing countries seem more or less resigned to this. In Nepal, 40 out of 252 garment factories, mostly those without direct contacts and stable relationships with importers, have already left the field and others are following the trend. This gave wider space to those who stayed in an industry often referred to as a '*nibhna lageko diyo*' [a lamp about to die out], indicating its short life ahead but also inferring that the lamp shines its brightest just before it goes out. While the factory owners appeared to look calm and optimistic at the outset, as I got to know them better they (or their key employees) disclosed that the MFA phase-out was felt like a 'sword hanging over their heads.'

Internal Chain of Events: The factories interviewed suggested that outsider-led development of the garment industry has been matched by internal adaptation. This is well reflected in the changing patterns of production items, production mechanisms, and the organisational structures of the factories. While a case study that I examined very closely (shown in the chart) is a good embodiment of the trend, a generic history of the industry further validates it.

Period of Establishment (until 1985): The first generation of garment factories was registered in Nepal in the early 1980s. This was the period when the government took two important steps for export promotion: first, a Nine-Point Export Promotion Programme was introduced allowing exporters access to policy privileges such as concessional credit; and second, provisions were made that NIDC,⁵ a government-controlled investment entity, compulsorily allocated 10 per cent of its investment to export industries. The policy move attracted about 60 factories within two to three years time. With rare exceptions, almost all of the garment factories were located in Baneshwor, a neighbourhood with an area of less than 1 sq. km, emerging fast at that time as a hub for newcomers to the Kathmandu Valley, mostly from the southern districts and beyond. Almost all of these factories were 'dependent' partnerships with manufacturers or businessmen from India. Since investments, technical know-how and purchase orders all came exclusively from India during this period, Nepali partners had hardly any role (Zivetz 1992: 182).

Owing to a virtual absence in Nepal of skilled labour for various production functions such as cutting, stitching and finishing, factories subcontracted these functions to traditional middlemen contractors, or *thekedars*, from India. The tasks were not scientifically defined nor were the teaching methods. Hence, only the hereditary tailors could grasp the technical skills required for this profession. In addition, the *thekedars* were paying their employees wages much lower than the legal minimum wage, so it served them better to bring in fellow villagers and kin, often young and novice learners, to do the work. As a result, access remained blocked in this industry for those outside such spatial and social networks. A majority of the workers remained non-Nepali or at least non-local.

Owing also to an absence of sophisticated machinery required for production, e.g. of button-attaching machines, over-lock stitching machines, embroidery machines, and automatic elastic-attaching machines, these tasks

were subcontracted outside the factories, mainly to Indian nationals who had brought these machines, again, across the border. In both aspects of garment manufacturing—core functions as well as subsidiary functions—the industry was primarily mono-national and mono-ethnic.

This is very much the picture one gets from reading through the coverage of this industry in both the state and vernacular media, and from several policy-level and academic writings. While this was true two decades ago, the industry has rapidly changed since then, and an absence of acknowledgement of any of the recent changes infers a stagnation of research that requires a major correction.

An Emerging Role for Nepalis (1986-1990): By the mid-1980s, Nepali industrialists had familiarised themselves with the various aspects of production and trading. This was made possible due to the inherent nature of the industry: it focused on basic and homogenised products, and production followed a linear mechanism which could be 'learned' and did not necessarily have to be 'inherited' as was the case for other export industries of the country, namely handicraft production, and to some extent, carpet-weaving. This led to a new phenomenon in which (i) some Nepali partners of the joint ventures with Indians took more active roles in factory operations; (ii) other Nepalis broke their partnership with Indians and started their own factories or formed partnership with fellow Nepalis; and (iii) the number of people investing in this industry increased dramatically, which may have been more a case of 'herd mentality' than a pragmatic business decision. Also, there were several cases of false registration of nonexistent factories with intentions of quota hoarding. Nevertheless, the number of registered firms exceeded 700 by 1990.

Policy-wise, this was a period of contradictions for Nepal. While the government accepted policy-based lending of the World Bank and IMF for the first time⁶—signalling to the international community willingness to move towards economic liberalisation—it actually revised the 1974 national industrial policy to further strengthen its protectionist measures. The formation of the Garment Association of Nepal (GAN) in 1988 had a more meaningful impact on the industry than the distant economic policies formulated at a national level. GAN not only brought together the scattered industry under one umbrella which made it possible not only to develop coordination mechanisms on important issues such as quota allocation and

floor pricing but also to develop a lobbying group to influence government policies.

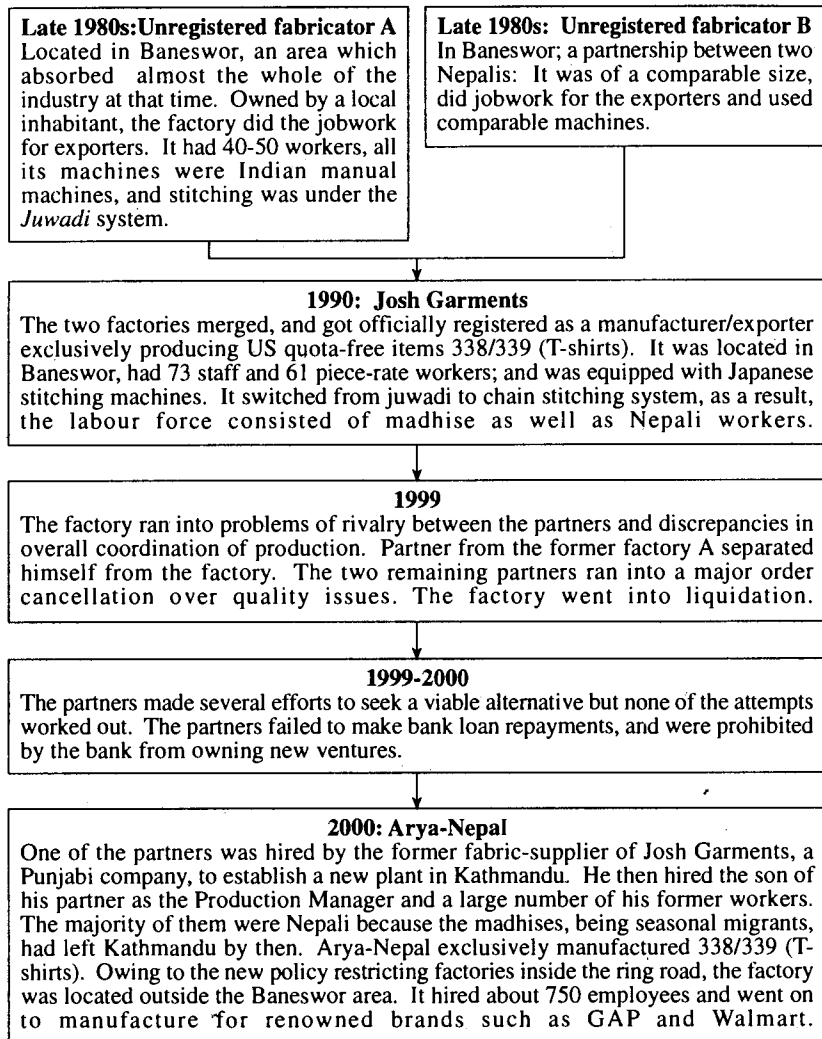
The global garment market underwent a quality upgrade in the early and mid 1990s. Correspondingly, there was pressure on the Nepalese garment industry for a major technology upgrade: (i) the Indian-made manually powered machines which were being used in most of the factories until then were replaced by Japanese and Taiwanese machines; and (ii) more sophisticated machines for tasks such as over-locking, flat-locking and button-holing were purchased by factories, making the subcontractors for these functions redundant.

The first move incurred a large capital augmentation in the industry: while the old Indian machines cost about 40 US dollars, new Juki and Brother machines cost more than 400 dollars. This transformed the industry from a 'middle-class business venture' to one attractive to the economic elite. Further, since the technology upgrade occurred simultaneously in all the factories, the resale value of the old machines deteriorated even more, forcing several factories to either give them away at token prices or pile them up as scrap. The gain however was that the Nepalese industry became capable of manufacturing garments that met global quality standards.

The second move in the industry, which was incorporation of subsidiary tasks into the mainstream, brought a major change in the labour structure. Earlier, the over-locking, flat-locking and button-holing functions were outside the reach of the workers because the machines were controlled by middlemen. Each over-locking and flat-locking machine cost about 900 dollars and the button-holing machines cost more than a thousand dollars. These machines were available only from India, which made it very difficult for individuals with little capital and no connections with India to invest in them. Bringing them into mainstream factory operations therefore separated the skill component from the capital, allowing anyone interested to learn and adapt the skill. It also reduced the cost of these functions dramatically: while earlier, about 50% of production wages went to button-holing, now a skilled operator would do it for a daily wage of 2 dollars. This marked the first round of structural adjustment in the industry.

Survival of the Fittest (1991-2000): This was the most turbulent period for the garment industry. At a policy level, the government introduced a new industrial policy, which minimised protective measures for the overall economy and took a strong step towards economic liberalisation. An

Figure 1: Evolution of the garment industry – an example from a case study



important aspect of this economic liberalisation package for the garment industry was the deregulation of the ownership of firms. The government formed a more relaxed policy towards semi-ownership of the firms in Nepal by non-Nepali investors. This significantly contributed to registration of new

factories, increasing the number registered from 757 in 1992 to as many as 1067 in 1994.

There then followed a period of cut-throat competition, whereby manufacturers' profit margins dropped by 20-30 percent. This was aggravated by restructuring among the garment buyers at a global level whereby smaller buyers were either substituted by or merged into bigger brands. The big brands had more sophisticated systems of transaction handling and stronger negotiation power. The impact of these transformations was two-fold for Nepal. A large number of factories shut down; and many others either merged with bigger factories or reduced their status to unregistered fabricators. From 1067 factories in 1994, the industry declined to 323 factories in 1995 and 212 or less from 2000 onwards.

Other important changes seen in the industry during this period were that: (i) production mechanism shifted from an ethnocentric 'juwadi' system to a more open and worker-friendly 'chain' system (see section 4); (ii) diversification of the source of fabrics; and (iii) strengthening of quality and social compliance. These features collectively contributed to making the garment industry one of the most transparent, organised and socially dynamic industries in the country.

Broader Challenges and Crises (2000 onwards): Internal turbulence within the garment industry seems to have diminished in mid 1990s. At least the industry avoided major policy and industrial upheavals. The number of factories remained more or less the same although the seasonality of production and internal labour problems continued to pose challenges.

The returns of a state of technical stability during this period, however, has been largely offset by the political instabilities to which the industry recently seems to have fallen prey. The industry has been taken hostage by circumstances that are beyond its control: The country is severely affected by the Maoist insurgency, which has mobilised labourers, first from the rural areas and then the urban, in armed resistance against the government. While this movement has hardly won support from the relatively privileged garment industry workers, frequent strikes and labour union activities (often imposed on the labourers without giving them much choice) have had serious repercussions on the smooth functioning of the factories. Early 2000 was marked by temporary and permanent closure of several factories whose purchase contracts were terminated owing to unforeseen delays in delivery caused by strikes and blockades in various parts of the country. Several

factories suffered heavy losses through having to deliver their products by air after missing shipping deadlines.⁷

Another big hurdle the industry is currently facing is the end of the MFA-granted quota, which has been Nepal's strongest comparative advantage in the international garment market. The industrialists have only started to realise the gravity of this policy change, and strategies for addressing it are still in their infancy (see section 3A and section 5 for more discussion on this).

The Industry Then and Now

It would be fair to say that the garment industry has come quite far in its gestation. Some of the changes that are obvious are the size, nature of production and organisational structure of factories. An industry which started with 58 experimental factories in 1982 now has 212 'seasoned' factories. Each factory had about 158 employees on average in the 1980s and early 1990s whereas there are currently an average of 417 staff/workers per factory. While factories started with about 100 machines, mostly made in India in a price range of 3 to 4 thousand Nepalese Rupees (USD 40-55), they have now come to own 309 Japanese/Taiwanese machines on average, each costing 30 to 40 thousand Rupees (USD 400-550). Several of them even own sophisticated machinery such as needle detecting machines, automatic elastic attaching machines and in-house washing facilities.

The industry has witnessed a significant diversification of manufacturing in the past decades. All but one of the factories interviewed had started their manufacturing with production of US quota items 347/348.⁸ This remains the most important exported item until now. Even until 2002, 347/348 remained the item to receive the largest American quota, of 1 million dozen, which was fully utilised before the end of the year. This might give the impression that the industry has remained static, which is not true. A radical change could be seen in the cumulative production of other items by the factories. While 12 of the 22 factories interviewed said they started their factory manufacturing 347/348 exclusively, they have now diversified their production to other, more value-added, items. Among those who previously manufactured only 347/348, five factories now also manufacture knit/woven, cotton shirts, blouses, t-shirts, skirts and coats.⁹ Those already manufacturing multiple items earlier now work on 17 other items in addition to 347/348. Some of these 17 items are large value-added items such as pyjamas, children's overalls and rompers, knit/woven dresses, home accessories, etc.

Table 1: The structure of factory organisation before and after liberalisation

Factory Indicators	Until 1990	After 2000
Average no. of machines in factory	91	309
Type of machines	Indian single-needle machines with manual power	Japanese Juki, Brother. Single-needle, over-lock and flat-lock machines
Average no. of workers	158	417
Work management system	Subcontracted	Factory controlled chain system
Workers' payment	Through contractor	Daily wages - Skilled Part rates - Skilled Monthly Adm./ salary - Unskilled
Subcontracted functions	Cutting, stitching, washing/ finishing, embroidery/ screen-printing, packing	Washing, embroidery and screen-printing

Source: A survey of 22 factories in Kathmandu, following semi-structured interviews, December 2003

Despite such positive trends, the industry, nevertheless, continues to lag behind a full quota consumption scenario. In 2003, 347/348 was the only item with full quota utilisation. The closest to full quota utilisation was 342/642, which met 24 per cent of the allocated quota, followed by 341/641 which took up about 15 per cent of the quota. Moderately priced garments 336 (women's dresses) reached only 10 per cent of the quota and lower-value-added garment 340 used less than 20 per cent of the quota. Quota allocations for high value-added items such as 239 (cotton infant-wear) and 359 (shawls/scarves) were virtually untouched.

Table 2: The structure of production before and after liberalisation

Factory Indicators	Until 1990	After 2000
Production item as per US-assigned categories ¹⁰	347, 348 (occasional cases of 335, 340, 341, 342)	347, 348 335, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 641, 642, 647, 648, 841, 835
Wholesale prices the factories charged to the buyers	USD 0-4 36% USD 4+ 64%	USD 0-4 55% USD 4+ 45%
Average size of order	16,790 Pcs	80,853 Pcs
Lead time required	87.5 Days	77.5 days
Buyers	Shah Safari, Kellwood, F.W. Woolworth, Body Drama, Jeetish, Till's, Children's Place	GAP, Wal-mart, K-mart, Kohls, AMC, Target, PVC, Zara, Miss Erica, Colby, May Dept. Store
Raw materials diversification	Mostly from India	58.3% India 30.5% China 11.2% Others

Source: A survey of 22 factories in Kathmandu, following semi-structured interviews, December 2003

While the portfolio of manufactured products has been diversified over the past decade, the portfolio of buyers seems to be narrowing. A large number of previous buyers have either gone out of business or have discontinued their businesses in Nepal. Until the mid-nineties, most of the factories supplied to Shah Safari, a large multinational buyer owned by ethnic Indian-Kenyans, and some worked for American buyers such as May Department Store, Target and Arrow. Yet others worked for India-based distribution companies such as Jeetish and Body Drama. Several of these have now either merged with bigger brands or have liquidated and left the field. For example, Shah Safari, which had a permanent buying house in Kathmandu and was importing 3-4 million dozens of garments only from Nepal to sell to the American market, shut down its garments wing in 1995. While some other brands still operate in reformed formats, others have been

merged into bigger brands. Currently, most of the clients of the factories include multinational companies, namely Gap, Walmart, Kmart, Kohls, AMC, and Zara. Many producers started with CMP (cut-make prices) terms of payment, where the task of merchandising was assigned to the buyer, limiting the role of the manufacturer and thereby cutting their profit margins. Now, the manufacturers seek and gain a bigger role through more favourable terms of payment such as FOB (free on board) or CMTP (cut-make-trim prices).

In addition to the changes in product, production mechanism, factory organisational structure and terms of payment, the most important achievement of the industry from the labour's perspective is the successful shift from subcontracting of production to a scientific 'chain system,' providing a transparent labour management and higher wages.

A Workers' Perspective

The industry was rightly regarded as a 'dowry' from India when it came to Nepal. The first generation garment factories agreed that they started with a labour force that almost entirely consisted of 'Indians.' The term 'Indians' in colloquial terms includes Nepalis from the bordering Tarai region, which was home to a large number of garment tailors. Since the two border population groups share a common language, physical appearance and religion, it is virtually impossible to ascertain their nationalities in the absence of a strong monitoring body. In addition, since there are marital ties between the two groups, it would be even more difficult to put them exclusively into one category.

'Juwadi' System: Until the mid-1990s, the production mechanism in the garment industry dictated that the tailor (s) from the south (Ansari, Mandal, Teli, etc.) initially monopolised the task of clothes production. In the formation phase of the garment industry, labour came from the same origin as capital and management -- the south. In addition to the scarcity of skill among Nepalis, what restricted labour to one ethnic group (*madhesis*) was the production mechanism followed until the early 1990s. Not only was the selection of workers biased under this system, the transfer of skills also followed a conventional kin-to-kin norm, with age acting as the basis.

Until mid-1995, production was done according to the *juwadi* system, whereby a flexible number of skilled and semi-skilled workers made a circle as in traditional gambling set-ups, or *khals*. In these set-ups, manufacturing

became more of a collective task in that less skilled members of the team did less demanding tasks, and in this process learned the skill of garment making. Those who just joined the pool were called *chelas* [mentees] or more colloquially, *bakaras* [goats, or learners] and young members were sent away as *bakaras* to the older members of the family or the broader community. After 6-12 months of *bakara* experience, he would become an independent *kaligadh*. Having *bakaras* benefited the *naike* [leader] because they were only nominally paid, yet having too many of them would constrain his saleability. He often needed to answer for the personal and business conduct of not only his *bakaras* but everybody in his *khal* and took full responsibilities for any mischief his *bakaras* made. Some of the striking features of the *juwadi* system were:

The *juwadis* of one *khal* almost always belonged to one locality and many of them were affine or consanguine kin, thus it seemed to reinforce kinship/locality ties over purely occupational ties.

Most *juwadis* came from traditional sewing families. Those who entered this profession by learning the skill did not have *juwas* but worked either individually or in equal partnership with one or two fellow tailors, who stood overall at the same level in the hierarchy.

There were no non-Tarai *juwadis*, and thus no women *juwadis* because women almost never accompanied their male kin in their temporary migration to Kathmandu. The *juwadis* lived jointly during their stay in Kathmandu.

There was an apparent hierarchy among the *juwadis* because the *naike* was in control of the overall management of the task. His surcharge on the workers' wages for carrying out the supervisory responsibilities was not only nominally high, but also ethically questionable. The new *bakaras* were given only nominal pocket-money of a couple of hundred rupees a month to qualify for which they also had to take cooking and cleaning responsibilities in the *juwa* 'families,' tasks which would otherwise have been carried out by a female member. The skilled workers earned less than one hundred rupees a day, which was much lower than the salary/wages given directly by the factory.

The firm managers preferred individual workers to *juwadis* because it was believed that quality was compromised by *juwadis* either because they were giving too much space for the *bakaras* to learn,¹¹ or because the overall job-division was poor.

All *juwadis* lived in the factory itself mostly because they did not really care much about the living conditions but also because given how little time they spent in Kathmandu (one season at a time), it would be difficult to arrange for rented properties, whereas non-*juwadi* workers tended to have their own homes or long-term rented properties.

These features explain why this system did not allow a fair and transparent competition to workers from all caste, class and geographic backgrounds, and hence the labour force in the garment industry remained predominantly 'Indian' in its formative years.

'Chain' or 'Line' system: The 'chain' or the 'line' system is a scientific and socially/ethnically inclusive system which the garment industry adopted after the mid-1990s. In this process, the factory is responsible for overall production layout, job distribution and supervision of the workers, as well as determination of wages.

The 'chain' system was conceived with a broad vision of transforming the rudimentary nature of labour organisation in Nepal into a socially responsible and economically viable system, and was clearly one of the tangible outcomes of the global movement on corporate social responsibility which had put strong pressure on the multinational garment distributors to ensure ethical monitoring of its faraway subcontractors. Owing to the consumer pressure back home, the multinational buyers put their third-world subcontractors to mandatory periodic checks on quality of the machinery and production mechanisms used, and the working conditions and remunerations for its workers. Such pressures pulled out the garment factories from the narrow residential houses they were previously working in, to modern commercial buildings with plenty of space and more hygienic working conditions. Although there were rampant cases of non-adherence to the codes of conduct behind the buyers' back, the overall working conditions and production mechanism in the garment industry was more sensitive to workers' needs than their traditional counterparts.

Twenty out of twenty-two factories I interviewed were operating in the chain system. This system assigned a qualified task manager to develop production layout, to calculate the number of machine-operators and helpers required, and to monitor productivity. Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview a sizeable sample of their workers directly. Instead, I give here a close-up account of the working system in one of the factories that I studied.

in depth (See table 3). In order to manufacture 102,300 polo shirts for GAP/Old Navy, worth about three hundred thousand US dollars, a 'chain' was worked out and set up within as little as two days in this factory.

There are two main reasons to believe that production line system is more organised, transparent and beneficial to workers than the *juwadi* system. First, in this system, the overall task is simplified and then divided, rather scientifically and minimising risk and waste factors, into a series of sub-tasks whereby coordination among these sub-tasks become as important as the task. The managers in this system thus deal with 10 to 40 persons in a production line as opposed to 4 or 5 in a *juwa*. When there are multiple production lines, the number easily reaches one hundred. What this means for labour hiring then is that at such large a scale and at such short a notice, it becomes extremely difficult to restrict recruitment to kin and other personal networks. Not surprisingly, in the factory that I studied closely, the majority of the workers found their way independently to the factory and were absorbed into the 'melting pot' of the factory, which created important solidarities between work-mates that transcended the barriers of caste, ethnicity and regional identity.

One ethnic division that transcended the occupational solidarity, however, was between the 'Nepalis' and the '*madhises*'¹². The *madhises* almost never brought their women with them when they came to the garment factories in Kathmandu on their seasonal migration, which gave rise to some distrust in matters regarding sexual behaviour. Nepali women often preferred to avoid working with the *madhises* to the extent possible. Further, since the *madhises* lived in factory-provided lodgings during their stay in Kathmandu which were designed for single persons, and pursued different religious and social customs than the hill-Nepalis, the two did not intermingle very well. Nevertheless, when it came to purely professional matters such as sharing a production 'chain' or giving work-related references to each other, the gap between the *madhise* and Nepali workers was not significant.

Second, 'chain' systems by nature discard the role of the traditional *naike* or *thekedar* who was fully in charge of the *khal* or *juwa*. These functions of labour supervision were consolidated instead into the overall factory

Table 3: An example of the ‘chain’ of Production

Product : polo shirt Buyer : GAP/Old Navy
Quantity : 102,300 Transaction value: USD 312,015
Line supervisors : Karki (M) and Shrestha (M) (monthly salary NRs. 7000+overtime payment)

Work process	Persons working (caste/ethnicity, gender, and origin)	Wages per piece (Nepalese Rupees)
1. Shoulder joint	Rajbhandari (M), Jhapa	0.40
2. Neck rib making - 'tanki'	Thapa Chhetri (F), Kathmandu	0.25
3. Thread cutting	Basnet (F); Kathmandu NEPALI (F), Kathmandu	O.T. + 2250/month
4. Neck rib attaching (2)	Pokhrel, Palpa Chand, Baitadi	0.70
5. Checking	Karki (F), Balaju *	
6. Neck tape making	(not ready at the time of analysis)	0.10
7. Neck tape attach Piping	PARIYAR *	0.70
8. Front neck cover stitch	Baiju, Janakpur	0.45
9. Back neck single needle	Gayum, Mahottari	0.40
10. Back tape 'pakka' with label	Nadaf, Mahottari *	0.90
11. Sorting	Gurung (F), Ramechhap	OT+2250
12. Label making	Tamang (F), Ramechhap	0.20
13. Sleeve attaching	Thapa Magar	0.80
14. Checking/sorting	Rai (F), Ramechhap	
15. Armhole cover stitch	Shrestha *	0.60
16. Side seam overlock	Karki *	0.80
17. Sorting	Karki (F), Kathmandu *	OT+2250
18. Bottom hemming	Mahat	0.75
19. Sleeve hemming	Thapa	0.90
20. Patch label 'kachcha' [preliminary]	(not ready at the time of analysis)	0.20
21. Patch label 'pakka' [final]	(not ready at the time of analysis)	0.30
TOTAL		8.45+salary

Note: Names of people from ascribed tailor castes are in CAPS and asterisks denote people whose kin are also working in the factory either in this 'chain' or other chains.

Source: Field work

management and its employees. While the production line supervisors have authority over the workers' professional conduct, these are far apart from their personal lives. And since the line supervisors' conduct will be further monitored by a higher management and ultimately by the buyers, they come under ethical scrutiny.

Third—and perhaps most important from the workers' point of view—is that after omitting the role of the *naike* and his surcharge, the wages increase significantly in this system, and working conditions are far better, at least compared to some other industries in Nepal. This is a clear advantage of bringing the institution into a formal framework, which is subject to social accounting and hence must abide by local and international laws. This works as a pull factor to attract workers who might not have been traditionally affiliated with this industry.

Ethnic/social Components of the Garment Industry

There has been considerable discussion, some of it inspired by Weber's writings on Hinduism and Buddhism, of whether the existence of castes in South Asian societies constitutes a block on economic development (See Gellner, 2001: ch. 1). The study of the garment industry gives a chance to examine this proposition further. The *juwadi* system clearly intensified the concentration of one ethnic group in this industry over others. The industry however has come a long way since its formation, and the current method of production has overcome its barriers on ethnic concentration. Currently, garment-making is a learnable skill, and has provided open access to people from all ethnic groups. This is one of the most important contributions this industry has made to contemporary Nepali society.

As I came to know the workers during my study in three case-factories, I recorded their genealogies and origins. Through in-depth study of a wide corpus of about 28 individuals selected randomly, I drew the conclusion that the garment industry is among very few industries in Nepal which gave access to decent wage-earning occupation to a wide range of people regardless of their caste and origin. While the tailor castes, who pursued tailoring as their family profession for centuries, had an apparent advantage in the stitching tasks in the garment industry, it was possible for others to learn and acquire the skills, either through formal training or job experience. Table 4 indicates that various non-tailor caste and non-*madhise* ethnic groups were working in the stitching chains of the garment factories. Further, the genealogies I collected brought forth that a large number of garment workers

were younger than an average industrial workers, and were those seeking change from the conventional norms. For example, a 24-year-old Newar woman from the farmer caste [*Maharjan*] was commuting across three districts of Kathmandu Valley to work in a garment factory. Her genealogy up to three generations revealed that all of her male kin were farmers and none of her female kin (except her older sister) ever had an individual profession nor possessed income-yielding vocational skills other than agriculture. And none of them had been married outside inner Bhaktapur. She started her career as an unskilled 'helper' and within six months was promoted to the position of a tailor. When I asked her why she had chosen this work, she explained that having no brothers in the family gave her a reason to seek alternatives to the traditional norms, and the high wages and relative career and personal security of the garment industry gave her an opportunity.

Several other women working in the factories had disaster stories to tell: of widowhood, of abandonment by their husbands and exclusion from their in-laws, of childlessness and thus social insecurity, antagonism of co-wives, etc. Some others had more positive accounts, for example, their families or kin had brought them into the industry. There were a large number of unskilled young men from the rural districts, who had fled to Kathmandu and joined the garment industry in order to escape recruitment by the Maoists.

The ethnic diversity of the garment labour force then leads us to ask what are the push and pull factors for people to join the garment industry, and what other alternatives are available to them? After agriculture, the industries employing large labour forces in Nepal are the handicraft, carpet-weaving and tourist industries. In a country where only 19 per cent of the total land is arable and a lion's share of the arable land is controlled by a small group of the population, mostly of the higher castes, agriculture is not too promising an occupation for the poor and low-caste workers (CBS 2002). As far as other industries are concerned, handicrafts is by nature an ethnic industry and non-artisan castes have virtually no access to it (Zivetz 1992: 82; HAN, 2003). Carpet-weaving also has an ethnic edge, at least in the ownership of the factories, in as much as the niche market for Nepal is in 'Tibetan' carpets rather than a generic weaving module (Graner 2001: 254). More importantly from the labour perspective, this industry has fallen victim to the child labour scandals, and owing to saturation of the demand, has reduced tremendously in size. Another option is tourism. But since this industry requires a certain

code of behaviour, or status, the rural and low-caste people do not have easy access to employment in the tourism industry.¹³

What encouraged non-caste workers to seek career in the garment industry was the plain fact that garment wages are higher than wages in comparable industries, namely government service, domestic labour, brick kilns, and agriculture. The per capita GNP of Nepal is 240 US dollars a year, and a national wage level would be about 3000 Nepalese Rupees per month against the legal minimum wages standing at the level of 2250 Nepalese Rupees.¹⁴ A skilled garment *kaligadh* in turn earns between 7000 to 15000 Nepalese Rupees a month. Working conditions in the garment industry are far better than in the other industries listed. In my interviews, many workers did say that they would choose to work in government offices if they had a choice, not because of the wages but for the sake of job security and status. Nevertheless, the workers were aware that it would be difficult for them to enter government service due to their lack of formal education and appropriate support networks. Under such circumstances, it would be fair to say that the garment industry continues to be a popular choice for less privileged people.

Upcoming Crises: WTO, Globalisers and the Maoists

The growth of the garment industry in Nepal has been largely overshadowed by the overall restructuring of the global policies. The WTO was formed through the Marrakech agreement in 1994, and within a year of its inception, it embarked upon the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) to put an end to the preferential country-specific quotas levied for import into the American market.

The past three years have witnessed a growing resignation among garment factory owners globally to the prospect that the MFA is destined to end on January 1, 2005. The United States, which controls the largest share of the global garment trade, is unwilling to forego its discretionary power and has resorted to alternative trade policies which benefit Africa and the Caribbean at the cost of South and East Asia. In 2000, two American acts of legislation —AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) and CBTPA (Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act)—have made provisions that garments originating in these regions would have a duty-free status in the US until 2008.¹⁵

The scope for Nepalese garments is reduced in this changed global scenario. The effects have been felt primarily in the form of a declining

number and size of purchase orders, cut-throat competition among the manufacturers and hence shrinking profit margins. This study shows that despite the technology upgrade and exploitation of economies of scale, more factories now than before are manufacturing cheaper items. While 27 per cent of the factories who disclosed this information were manufacturing garments items with prices 8 US dollars or more on their inception in the early 1990s, only 14 per cent of the factories could afford to stay in this price range by 2003.

Moreover, during my discussions with the factory owners, it came up repeatedly that they were aware of the 'ticking clock.' Some owners were starting to make alternative business plans for the factory premises after 2004; others had started manufacturing for the local market instead; and yet others had decided to retire. Almost all owners were aware of the financial costs the expiry of the MFA would incur. One of them compared this to the radical technology upgrade of the mid-1990s when the old Indian stitching machines were abruptly replaced with the Japanese machines in most factories, under the buyers' pressure to meet their quality standards. The upgrade incurred a big loss but was not disastrous because the investments had been well recovered in the succeeding years.

The workers, however, did not share anticipation for the unpreventable dismantling of the industry. Several of the workers that I spoke to were hardly aware of the new developments on MFA. They did not have alternative career plans nor did they anticipate that their current employment was facing an abrupt end. The majority of the labour force comes from outside the Kathmandu valley, and only a very few of them had saved enough to support them in their current residence for some time, in case their source of income were to dry up. Given the Maoist insurgency and the fact that the country is currently going through an economic depression, the MFA dismantling could hardly come at a worst possible time for Nepal, and might bring with it a mounting unemployment problem, which could possibly only boost either Maoist recruitment or emigration.

A Proposed Nepalese Garment Bill in the US House

Many policy makers and the owners of the garment factories had high hopes for the advocacy led by the Nepalese government to seek policy concessions in the American market. In a legislative bill tabled for discussion in the US Senate in March 2003, its sponsor, Diane Feinstein, the Democratic Senator from California, proposed the provision of duty-free status for Nepalese

garments for a two-year period. For the bill to be approved as legislation, it had to be co-sponsored by one more Senator in the Senate, but in the meantime, it had to be sponsored by at least two Congressmen in the House of Representatives. The bill, however, came to a standstill after a number of unanticipated political issues took it hostage. An American merchant power company lobbied against the bill in the Senate claiming that Nepal's decision to refuse to settle its financial claims over a hydropower construction project based in Nepal was a legally erroneous one. Subsequently, Nepal also failed to address the American dissatisfaction over its handing over of some Tibetan refugees to the Chinese government in July 2003. As a reprisal, the Nepal bill was withdrawn from the US Senate. Although the Senator reinstated her support after negotiations with a Secretary-level government delegation, and a Republican Congressman from New York subsequently tabled the bill in the US House of Representatives, it never made it to legislation.

Labour Union Movements and the Maoist Crisis

Re-establishment of multi-party democracy in 1990 brought an unprecedented political upheaval among the labour force. Labour unions, which were legally prohibited along with the political parties under the Panchayat regime, were made free to expand and strengthen their organisation under the multi-party parliamentary system. While a large number of the garment factory owners played an active role in supporting the popular movement to overthrow the Panchayat regime through street protests, they soon came to develop serious concerns about the 'unconstructive' use of the labour force by the political parties. Most of the factory owners shared the opinion that the labour movements directly supported by the political parties contributed to artificial increases in wages, compromises on labour productivity and distraction of the workers to issues that were non-industrial.

Labour-related problems escalated after the Maoists strengthened their movement in the late 1990s. The garment industry, being one of the largest labour-intensive industries in the country, appears to have been a primary target of the Maoists. Owing to the Maoist problem (and also the unavoidable exhaustion of American quotas by end-2004), three of the twenty-two factories that I visited had suspended their operations, and five more were operating in a reduced capacity.

Figure 2: The cloth-makers and the Maoists:

Arya-Nepal is a large-scale producer of low-price, homogenized garments for the American market, located on the ring road of Kathmandu. Before coming into direct contact with the Maoists, the factory management was sympathetic, rather naively, to the principle that the Maoists are fighting to 'build the nation.' Initially, the factory was called to make periodic donations to the Maoists. While this created some resistance among the owners, there was no stern opposition as it was customary for the industrialists to make donations to the various political parties and charity organisations.

After the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and the Maoists announced a ceasefire between August and November 2001, the Maoists turned to organisational expansion and strengthening in the labour-intensive factories inside and outside the Kathmandu valley, including the garment factories. Contrary to the hopes of factory owners for smoother functioning, the Maoists organised a series of mass meetings and public debates in the factories. Before the industrialists had time to address this, their operations were brought to a halt. Soon after the government-Maoist talks commenced, factory owners were disillusioned: the Maoists had penetrated into their labour force and those who were perceived to be the most loyal to the factory were now organising protests imposing a series of radical labour demands. They would have been fired instantly under ordinary circumstances, but the government took a liberal approach during the ceasefire, and the factories followed suit. Given the rapid turnover among their workers it was impossible to fully know the personal and political whereabouts of the workers. Nevertheless, management just ignored the conduct of the pro-Maoists.

In about three weeks time, a labour union committee was swiftly formed which then gave the management an ultimatum, asking for, among other demands, a salary increment of up to five thousand Nepalese rupees for unskilled employees (from the existing 2250), doubling of salaries for the supervisors, and a 50 per cent rise in the piece-rate wages at all levels. The factory simply could not afford it. There were attempts to seek protection from the local representatives of the mainstream political parties, but it proved inadequate to the overwhelming Maoist force. The management then undertook a series of negotiations with the local Maoist

representatives, which did not lead to conciliation. Inevitably, the factory operations came to a standstill.

In November 2001, the Government held a third round of talks with the national level Maoist leaders, and failed. Within a week, the Maoists announced resurrection of the Peoples' War and the Government declared the Maoists to be terrorists. This brought about a drastic change of scenario in Arya-Nepal. The key people who had led the uprising in the factory were nowhere to be seen. Nevertheless, a number of workers were fired. Two of the workers were arrested, and with that, the factory returned to normal operation.

When a second ceasefire was declared in September 2002, the factory went in to a state of high alert. They had by then hired the Group-4 Security Service, the best equipped security service in the country, and carefully kept track of the activities of as many suspect workers as possible.

Source: Field notes

The experience of this factory with the Maoists was a rather mild one compared to some other factories. There were cases where factories were physically vandalised by the Maoists and whose operations came to an end.

Concluding Remarks

The article attempted to explain the boom and bust in one of the largest and most modern industries in Nepal, and examine the roles of the internal and external factors in such occurrence. In doing so, the article also tried to unveil the myth that wrapped the industry, of being an 'Indian satellite' industry. Instead, it tried to address some of the most rapid changes the industry underwent in terms of its production mechanism, organisational restructuring and the use of technology.

Unlike several traditional industries which evolved slowly and hesitatingly over decades, the ready-made garment industry in Nepal, followed a short-cut to growth. The fast pace of growth and the large scale of its operations made it one of the most effective agents of economic and social change in the past two decades. During its boom years, the industry undoubtedly benefited from the neoclassical economic principles of free-market apparatus, economies of scale, and the social externalities. Nevertheless, the glow of the so-called 'industrial miracle' soon started to

fade as soon as the external developments turned against Nepal for reasons that were not purely economic nor within the reach of the country.

The suspension of the 'miracle' brought forth three important aspects: First, that the sudden upheaval of the industry which had made it the darling of every investor had actually left its risk-hedging aspects immature. As a result, the industry never developed sound technical or policy mechanisms to protect itself from the external shocks. In this regard, the garment industry embodied a 'growing machine' that was never backed by adequate safety nets.

Second, the rapid growth of the industry also surpassed the pace of policy and academic discourse. While the industry had rapidly moved on to become one of the most important sources of revenue for the country, and the one that provided a livelihood for a large number of industrialists as well as skilled and unskilled labour of the country, the academic and policy discourse on this industry was frozen in its perception of the industry as an Indian satellite industry. It is an irony that the myth of 'Indian-ness' widely veiled the real character of the industry in the contemporary academic and policy studies, which only added salt to the wound by failing to provide meaningful policy support or even understanding at a time of need.

Third, the denouement of the drama brought forth important lessons as to how the economic proceedings are subject to changes in the broader political and social climates. This unfolding of events clearly highlighted the need to seek qualifications to the so-called universal economic principles of demand-supply and the 'invisible hand.' There is every reason to go beyond such economic rhetoric to seek the 'visible hands' which control the moods of the market in a world of inequalities and political interference.

Acknowledgement of these 'visible hands' then brings forth a policy dilemma for countries sharing similar strengths and drawbacks to Nepal, of availability of cheap labour, a scarcely tapped industrial base, rudimentary technology and skills, and remote access to raw materials and markets. On the one hand, integration into the global economy appeared to offer quick and attractive returns, not only to the economy of the country but also its society and polity. On the other hand, such industries tended to remain 'rootless' in terms of sustainability and risk management. At a deeper level, it became clear that the industry such as these were created purely by the conjuncture of certain external factors and that the global trade system is inherently heartless, or even just whimsical, when it comes to the ease with which large powers can simply change the rules of the game at will and make or break

entire industries with little concern for the social and economic consequences in the vulnerable supplier countries. Such a reality only reinforces the need to move beyond the rhetoric of cheap labour and price competition, and seek real comparative advantages and a solid grip on niche markets.

Notes

- 1 GEFONT stands for General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions
- 2 2002 figures, source: Garment Association of Nepal
- 3 The US garment quota assigned for Nepal was estimated to be 2.38 pieces per capita
- 4 Garment manufacturing in Nepal is considered to be 20-35 per cent more expensive than manufacturing in India because of additional transportation and merchandising costs as well as lower labour productivity.
- 5 Nepal Industrial Development Corporation.
- 6 IMF standby credit in 1985/86 and World Bank credits SAL in 1987 and 1989.
- 7 It costs USD 2.85 per Kg. to airlift goods from Nepal to the US whereas shipment of a 40 feet container via Calcutta costs USD 4700, which represents a huge difference in cost.
- 8 Trousers, slacks for men/boys and women/girls (knit and woven).
- 9 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 635, and 663.
- 10 347/348 - trousers/shorts; 335 - coats; 338/339 - men's and women's knit-shirts; 340/341 - shirts/blouses; 342 - skirts. Codes starting with '3' denotes cotton, '6' rayon and '8' silk.
- 11 The *naike* preferred as many *bakaras* as he could manage because the remuneration he gave them was extremely low but in the meantime he could build a cohort of workers who would be loyal to him in future.
- 12 Due to cross-border marriages, common appearance and the use of common language, there is a massive overlap between the official identities both as Nepalis and Indians based on their passports. In the 26 genealogies that I collected of Tarai-based workers, 18 respondents said they had one Nepali parent and 2 respondents said they had one Nepali grandparent. I have used the term 'madhise' collectively to indicate the inhabitants of both sides of the Nepal-India border.
- 13 The trekking component of the tourism industry was largely controlled by the Gurungs and Sherpas, the catering and service industry mostly employed the high-caste people. The work that was open for the lower-caste workers included cleaning, gardening, building maintenance, etc, and occupied only a small share in the overall tourism industry.
- 14 GNP per capita is effectively per family in countries such as Nepal where women, children and retired persons are dependent on one earning family member. Hence, a national wage level would be approximately two times GNP per capita.
- 15 The American duty on garments ranges from 10 to 30 per cent of the product price.

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CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM IN NEPAL: EMERGING ISSUES AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW PARADIGM

Hari Prasad Bhattarai

Background

The management of cultural pluralism and diversity has become a focus of attention because of their universal existence in terms of race, religion, language, cultural differences, etc. in most of the world's nation states. In Nepal, particularly after the restoration of democracy in 1990, there is a growing academic as well as public debate to redefine the role of the state and the nature of governance to accommodate its diverse social, cultural, ethnic, language, and racial groups on an equal footing.

Plural societies such as Nepal face one basic dilemma. On the one hand, all members of the liberal democracy are—in principle if not in practice—entitled to the same rights and opportunities. On the other hand, they also have the right to be different—and after 1990, the rights of minorities (especially of *janajatis* and *dalits*) to maintain and promote their cultural distinctiveness and to be visible in the public spheres, including the mass media, school curricula, and so on, are increasingly insisted on. A crucial challenge for plural societies therefore consists of allowing cultural differences to persist without violating common and societally defined rights. In other words, the challenge consists of finding a viable compromise, for the state as well as the citizens (representing power and agency respectively), between equal rights and the right to be different.

If we take a dynamic and positive view of ethnic, religious, and cultural and other forms of diversity as an invitation for people to interact, to celebrate and to learn from difference rather than a passive acceptance of the fact that diversity simply exist, it can make an important contribution to the balanced development of plural countries such as Nepal. This paper is an attempt to discuss some of these emerging issues of cultural pluralism and

diversity in Nepal and to propose an alternative perspective to address the issues in new ways. This paper is primarily based on a review of literatures but I have also used my own empirical materials (M.Phil, MA and other field research) while developing my arguments. The central issue of the paper guided me to adopt a range of theoretical perspectives and approaches. I have tried to introduce theories while presenting my data and developing my argument in the subsequent sections of this paper.

This paper has been divided into seven sections. The first section introduces the background of the paper. The second section clarifies the meaning of cultural pluralism, diversity and plural society. In third section, I present an overview of theories and perspectives of cultural pluralism and diversity. Section four focuses on Nepalese pluralism, presents a retrospective of ethnic and cultural accommodations and provides an assessment of constitutional provisions to accommodate the country's diverse groups into the national mainstream. Section five discusses the emerging and enduring issues of cultural diversity of the country. Section six proposes some paradigms of cultural and ethnic accommodation to address the tremendous diversity of the country. Section seven concludes the paper presenting an alternative perspective to deal with the emerging and enduring issues of cultural diversity of the country.

The Concept of Cultural Diversity, Pluralism and Plural Societies

The *Oxford Talking Dictionary of English* defines 'pluralism' as a form of society or state in which ethnic or cultural groups maintain their independent traditions, practices, and attitudes.¹ Other definitions include the toleration or acceptance of a diversity of opinions, values, theories, etc. Similarly, the dictionary meaning of 'diversity' indicates the condition or quality of being diverse, different, or varied; variety, unlikeness. Thus the concept of pluralism reflects the social reality determined by languages, religions, ethnic memberships, and cultural traditions and implies control of institutions by members of the constituent groups (Bentley 1971:337).

The concept of cultural diversity also implies a societal condition comprising of many groups—ethnic, racial, and religious—with distinctive heritages, values, languages, and lifestyles. But the concept does not connote any clear-cut perspective, vision and movement to maintain equality, equal rights and separate identity among the diverse groups in the society. The concept of pluralism, however, implies not only the condition of existence of cultural diversity in any society but signifies a concrete vision, and

perspective of promoting, and maintaining the separate identities of the constituent groups on the basis of equality and equal rights.

Through differing in many ways, at present many scholars share Van den Berge's (1973:961) definition of pluralism which refers to "a property, or set of properties, of societies wherein several distinct social and/or cultural groups coexist within the boundaries of a single polity and share a common economic system that makes them interdependent, yet maintain a greater or lesser degree of autonomy and a set of discrete institutional structures in other spheres of social life."

In plural society, memberships in distinctive ethnic, religious, or cultural groups are accepted and even applauded. Pluralistic societies pride themselves on the freedom granted to diverse groups to preserve their different heritages, support various religions, speak different languages and develop independent associations. In essence, this freedom is qualified only by the enforcement of loyalty to the prevailing political and economic system. This implies an appreciation of, and respect for, intercultural difference. However, emphasis has been given to the manner, extent, and functioning of pluralism within societies rather than on identifying and defining plural societies.

Thus, the concept of cultural pluralism and diversity denotes at least four meanings. It is a metaphysical theory, which claims that reality consists of a multiplicity of distinct, fundamental entities. It indicates a particular social condition of racial and ethnic or cultural diversity resulting from immigration, conquest or any other means. It includes a vision or a movement of a free and diverse society in which all individuals or groups live peacefully and amicably on a footing of equality with each other. And finally, it is a complex network of laws, programmes, and policies for managing that diversity.

In most societies the relationship between ethnic and cultural groups is not permanently fixed but changes in time and space. Scholars have identified four basic patterns of interrelationship between ethnic, racial or cultural groups in a plural society:

- a. **Amalgamation** ($A+B+C = D$), the process in which contact between different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups lead to the formation of a new cultural and ethnic group. The Newars of Kathmandu Valley are one possible example of an amalgamated community.
- b. **Assimilation** ($A+B+C = A$), the process of interaction between different groups in which the minority groups adopt the values and pattern of behaviour of the majority, and are ultimately absorbed by the majority group. Some of the Hinduized ethnic groups of Nepal, such as Magars, might offer examples of this model.
- c. **Segregation** ($A \# B = A \# B$), the spatial separation of race, cultural and ethnic group by discriminatory means. It can be enforced by laws. The system of apartheid in South Africa and the caste system before 1962 in Nepal are examples.
- d. **Pluralism** ($A+B+C = A+B+C$), a condition of society or a nation in which multiple ethnic and cultural units co-exist in dynamic relation to one another enjoying more or less equal rights and opportunities. Canadian, Australian and Swedish societies could be some examples.

Thus different forms of relationship exist between and among the diverse groups of a plural society. Metaphorically, they are known as "fruit salad" or "rainbow" or "garden" on the one hand, the "fruit compote" or "melting pot" on the other. In the fruit salad/rainbow/garden, the components are clearly distinct, ethnic and cultural boundaries are intact, and reflexively rooted identities are secure and stable. In the fruit compote/melting pot, on the other hand, the different fruits are squashed and mixed together with substantial use of force.

Theories of Pluralism and Diversity

Theories of the plural society or of pluralism stress the relationships (cleavages, or discontinuities, or mutual respect or co-operation and so on) between sections differentiated by race, ethnicity, language, religion or culture. These bases of differentiation are, however, not totally regarded as "primordial" (Geertz 1963) but are socially, culturally, politically and historically structured in the process of interaction.

Political Perspective

When we talk about pluralism from the political perspective, we mean the institutional incorporation of different ethnic groups or collectivities into one societal state system. This formulation of theories of plural societies emphasizes political structure rather than cultural difference. M.G Smith (1974), one of the proponents of this approach of pluralism or plural societies, introduces the *mode of political incorporation* as a central concept. He identifies three modes of incorporation, the principles on the basis of which individuals or collectivities are incorporated into membership of the society: uniform or universalistic, equivalent or complementary and differential (1974:333-7).

Under universalistic or uniform incorporation, individuals hold their citizenship directly and not through sectional identification, and they hold their citizenship on the basis of equality, where as in equivalent or complimentary incorporation, and under differential incorporation, they are link to the polity, and their rights and duties are defined through their sectional membership. In equivalent or complimentary incorporation, the society is constituted as a consociation of complimentary or equivalent, but mutually exclusive corporate divisions, memberships in one of which is prerequisite for citizenship in the wider unit. In differential incorporation, the society is constituted as an order of structurally unequal and exclusive corporate sections that is as an explicitly plural regime. Thus, pluralism, then, defined in terms of unintegrated institutional structure, is much more widespread condition than the other criteria of plural societies, which must satisfy the additional criterion of differential incorporation.

Based on these different modes of incorporations, M.G Smith has distinguished three types of pluralism. The first of these is *cultural pluralism*, which refers simply to institutional differences without a corresponding collective segregation. Cultural pluralism usually exists in societies constituted on the basis of uniform mode of incorporation. Second, there is *social pluralism* that represents the condition in which institutional differences coincides with the sharp division of society in to closed corporate groups. Third, there is *structural pluralism*, which consists in the association of cultural and social pluralism with differential incorporation.

From the above discussion, I may argue that Smith's theory of pluralism is more taxonomical rather than explanatory. By this I mean his categories of analysis are comprehensive and informative but only an elaborate mapping exercise, covering neatly the different subspecies of plural societies

according to the degree to which cultural difference is embedded institutional rules and practices. This theory does not provide us the causal and functional account of origin and dynamics of the plural societies in question. For this we need another framework for understanding the complexity of pluralism.

Interactionist Perspective

It seems common sense that the term "cultural pluralism" should refer to a situation in which several cultural traditions coexist in one community. But modern refinements in cultural analysis have increasingly rendered the concept 'cultural pluralism' as understood in commonsense unfit for any discussion of pluralism. Our accounts no longer provide empirically and distributionally bounded descriptions of cultures, composed of identifiable elements or items, and they no longer pretend to provide an exhaustive or gross picture of the content of a heritage (Barth 1984: 79).

For an analysis of the dynamics of cultural pluralism, one should develop some criteria by which one can identify and separate the 'stream' or 'tradition' that together comprise the plural scene. In this process, we need to develop a discovery procedure to ascertain how ideas/cultural items cohere in cultural stream or tradition, what the gross content of each tradition is, and how the contradiction and variation in a plural situation is reproduced and affects one another. Such contradiction and variation can be separated, and their coherence and contents can be explored by describing their social organisation, their distribution in space, their history, and their prospects (Barth 1984:82).

From the above discussion, it is clear that in order to differentiate the strands or streams of a plural society, we need to find out the separate tradition of cultures with their different histories and different prospects, so as to make an inventory of the local distinctive conditions of the perpetuation and change and their interdependence and dynamics. This focus on the distinct cultural traditions as the object of major interest must also affect how we phrase our question and description. Thus, in any plural context, we should not ask how culture is 'shared' between people, but instead investigate the process of 'enrolment' and 'embracement' whereby people come to participate in tradition.

Perspective from Power Relation: Pluralism is not merely a synonym for ethnic diversity within political analysis. Theories of cultural pluralism, which here include multiculturalism, identity politics, the politics of difference and the 'new' pluralism, involve questions about how the

distribution of power and resources is or ought to be affected by cultural membership (Eisenberg 2000). In other words, the study of cultural pluralism looks at how power and resources are distributed to cultural groups. What accounts for a cultural group as a resource that can be drawn upon to improve its cultural security, or what are the circumstances that disempower a cultural group? In this regard, one of the most common concerns today is that seemingly neutral policies, practices, institutions and ways of thinking maintain the dominance of one cultural group over other (ibid).

However, since almost all societies contain more than one cultural group, the question is not whether power is distributed to cultural group, but rather to which culture(s) it is distributed in what proportion. Issues as disparate as affirmative action, ethnic conflict and secession fall under the umbrella of inquires about cultural pluralism because all essentially involve debates about the power and resources ought to be distributed among people of different identities.

Cultural Pluralism and Diversity in Nepal

The composite fabric of Nepali culture has been woven with strands and shades of varying textures and colours. It is no exaggeration to say that since ancient times Nepal has been characterized as a meeting place for many groups, religions, races and cultures.

Despite its small size, Nepal is characterized by a cultural assortment of religions, languages, caste, ethnic groups and indigenous people. At present, 101 ethnic and caste groups and subgroups, and 93 living languages have been documented (CBS, 2001). In addition, these caste, ethnic and language groups are further divided into eight major religions: Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Kirat, Jain, Sikh, Christian and Bahai. The following categories of people more or less represent the population composition of the diverse groups of the country (see annex 1 for details).²

1. **Parbatiyas**- groups considered caste Hindus ("twice-born" castes as well as so called "untouchables") speaking Nepali as their mother tongue comprise about 39%.
2. **Janajatis**- hill and mountain ethnic groups of Tibeto-Burman language speakers comprise about 22%.
3. **Newars**- followers of both Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions comprise about 5%.

4. '*Madhises*', peoples of the plains, comprise about **32%**, including about **18%** caste Hindus, about **10%** plains ethnic groups and about **4%** Muslims.
5. Marwari, Bangali, Sikhs, Christians and "unidentified" caste and ethnic groups consist of about **2%**.

These wide-ranging cultural diversities in terms of caste/ethnicity, race, religion, languages, regionalism, and traditions of knowledge make Nepali society a cultural mosaic in the true sense (Dahal 1995; Bista 1982).

Management of Cultural Pluralism and Diversity:

A Historical Overview

The process of nation-state building, more specifically the ways the rulers in the past tried to 'manage' cultural diversities and pluralism had far reaching consequences for the different groups. This section presents an overview of the major efforts to accommodate Nepal's diverse cultures over the course of three political epochs, viz. the Shah and Rana Period (1768-1951), the Panchayat Period (1962-1990) and the Democratic Period (1990 onwards). It also discusses the constitutional (1990) provisions addressing cultural pluralism and diversity of the country.

The Shahs and Ranas Period (1768-1951): Before 1768, Nepal was divided into small kingdoms and principalities and therefore it is difficult to give an overview of pluralism and its management in Nepal. King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Gorkha king who unified the country in the late eighteen century, referred to his new kingdom as a "garden bedecked with four *varna* and thirty-six *jats*", the four traditional castes of the Hindu *varna* system, by which the Hindu people of Nepal of lower middle hill regions were organized; and thirty-six known "tribes" or what today known as *janajati* people – who made up Nepal's known indigenous population of Buddhist, Hindu and animist peoples and occupied the higher hill and mountain ranges to the north (Sharma 1992). This caste and ethnic schema was gradually entwined with the Hindu great tradition, albeit without intensively disturbing the local cultures (Dahal 1995).

The schema was codified in the Muluki Ain of 1854, a legal code that prescribed different kinds of rights and duties based on a religiously sanctioned caste hierarchy. In effect, the Muluki Ain categorized all the people of Nepal into the following five distinct hierarchical ranks, without

seriously considering the diversity and complexity of the Nepali culture. The orders were:

1. Castes group of wearing **sacred** thread known as *tagadhari*
2. Groups of 'non-enslavable' liquor consuming caste, called *namasine matwali*
3. Groups of 'enslavable' liquor consuming caste, called *masine matwali*
4. Impure but 'touchable' castes
5. Untouchable castes

From the point of view of **the rulers**, the plurality of the Nepalese society was conceived within a **uniform socio-political** framework. The diverse caste and ethnic groups were **incorporated into** a holistic framework of a 'national caste hierarchy' (Höfer 1979). On the **other** hand, diversity was translated into inequality; positions were **increasingly** ascribed to different ranks that corresponded with caste/ethnic divisions. Rather than seeking to establish **national** unity through a vision of **culturally** homogenous population, the **rulers** sought to define a national identity **which** allowed for cultural variation **but which** had Hinduism as its major pillar (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999). In other words, by dividing their subjects into castes, the pre- 1951 rulers united large sections of Nepalese population under the aegis of a Hindu ritual framework, thus allowing for diversity.

During the period of Shah and Rana rule, social harmony as well as national cultural identity was maintained by strictly enforcing Hindu laws. In other words, the rulers consolidated their powers by arranging all groups of Nepal in a hierarchical framework of the Hindu caste structure. The Hindu values of morals and merits were enforced to provide the support base for the despotic regime. Within this framework of an emerging Hindu polity, ethnic populations, notably ethnic elites, responded by adopting the specific cultural symbols of those in the powers. Pfaff-Czarnecka (1997: 421-22) has rightly called this as the "empire model" of national integration, which resembles the pluralism of Byzantine Empire, with a high degree of structural differentiation against the background of a unifying socio-political framework with differing social function attributed to hierarchically differentiated strata.

The Panchayat Period (1962-1990): Along with the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950, Nepal opened her door to the outside world encouraging the process of democratization and modernization. Rather than developing a new model of ethnic pluralism, the Panchayat rulers sought to promote modernization imperatives³ (e.g. abolition of the Muluki Ain of 1854, land reform, standardization of the system of education and development efforts with the help of foreign aid) by advocating homogenization—one nation sharing one culture. Pfaff-Czarnecka (1997) has called this model of ethnic and cultural accommodation the "nationalist model." Beyond forging national identity in a changing geopolitical environment, the requirements of modernization, as understood worldwide during the 1960s and 1970s called for national unity, particularly in the sense of sharing one culture.

Within the process of creating a nation, the Panchayat government adopted an assimilationist policy, insisting upon creating a homogenous development society (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999:55-56, Gaige 1975). In official rhetoric, however, the Nepali nation was presented as made up of equal citizens sharing a common culture, which is sharing cultural elements of *parbatiya* Hindus (Burghart 1984). Hence, equality was proclaimed but apparently it could only be achieved by suppressing difference. In addition, cultural unity was perceived as means of value integration and means of communication that became indispensable within the development process. Any claim to ethnic identity was reduced to political rebellion during the Panchayat period.

Even within this given structure, one of the most dramatic changes that took place was the introduction of New Legal Code (Naya Muluki Ain) in 1964. According to this Code, nobody could claim inferiority or superiority on the basis of race, caste and creed; everybody was equal before the law (Dahal 1995). No doubt many of the strictures of the caste system such as the 'defiling' of food and water by the low castes and religious sanctions against anti-caste behaviour have weakened after the introduction of the new code but the caste system is alive and, in some cases, has become more distinct and prominent over the years. Caste forms the basis of social interaction among the majority of Nepal's diverse ethnic population and there is a fairly uniform order of caste ranking even today. This is because those ethnic/caste groups whose social position is higher in the traditional hierarchy have appropriated much of the power, influence, wealth and prestige available within the system. Thus, "high caste" values have become a model to raise

one's socio-economic status and even to identify oneself in the existing social and political structure.

The Democratic Period (1990 onwards): After a long struggle, Nepal was able to form a democratic government in April 1990 that enacted a new constitution. The new constitution for the first time defines *adhirajya*, the kingdom, as a multiethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and constitutional monarchical kingdom. But the definition is not inclusive enough: the various ethnic groups of Nepal are not Hindus and their mother tongue is not the Nepali language. However, it can be taken as a breakthrough from the historical model of national integration in its promise to 'maintain the cultural diversity of the country' and to promote 'healthy and cordial social relations amongst the various religions, castes, tribes and communities and linguistic groups' by aiding 'to conserve and promote their language, literatures, scripts, arts and cultures (Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990).

On paper at least, the constitution of 1990 allows Nepalese the opportunity to abandon their subject status and emerge as citizens. Pfaff-Czarnecka (1997) has called this type of ethnic and cultural accommodation a "patchwork of minorities' model". The minorities are now uniting to institute internal reforms and take public action breaking way from the former modes of accommodation. The admission of ethnic languages in the Nepalese mass media, among others, helped to bring out ethnic articulations in the streets. During the Panchayat period, minorities' cultures were certainly neglected, if not suppressed; if ethnic culture was present in the public arena at all, it was folklorized. However, even though the majority of poor ethnic population continues to carry the heavy load of their identities (Campbell 1997), an increasing number of people now dare to assert publicly that their cultures are not inferior, but different. As a reaction to former government's assimilationist cultural policy, a number of ethnic groups, using open space of democratic era, publicly demand to protect and preserve their cultural traits and stress the importance of rethinking Nepal's cultural identity.

Thus, after decades of homogenization measures, it is now cultural diversity and pluralism that orient cultural discourse. Differences are stressed by insisting upon distinct languages, distinct origins, distinct religious orientations and distinct chronicles. In this process, the uniformity of cultural endeavours is striking. Distinctions are worked out by constant references to language (often seeking to invent a new script), narratives of ethnic origin

and debates on valid religious forms (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999:84). At the same time some groups (eg *janajatis*) have become ever more concerned to express how utterly different they are; culture and cultural differences are spoken about more often, and cultural differences are brought to bear on daily life, public rituals, media and political organizations to a greater extent than was earlier the case. Partly this is because different groups are in closer contact than earlier and compete for the same scarce resources; but it is also partly because members of ethnic groups in Nepal feel that their cultural boundaries are threatened by tendencies towards Hinduization and therefore feel an acute need to advertise their cultural difference.

Moreover, following the global debates on minority rights, indigenous people and human rights and the international recognition of the protection of human and minority rights as indispensable part of governance, different communities of Nepal have started to assert their status as 'minorities', 'nationalities', 'indigenous people' of the country. The constructed symbols of Nepali nationalism are being questioned. The benevolent and encompassing nation state of "gardens of all caste and ethnic groups" is now criticized as being the hegemonic power domicile of certain groups (i.e. high caste hill Hindus), a 'predatory state' (Bhattachan 1998), 'communal' (Gurung et.al 2000), 'cultural imperialist' (Lawati 2001), 'internal colonizers' (Subba 2000), etc., by different scholars and activists. Thus they see past efforts of state building as an attempt by some groups to gain state power over other groups through state policies that were favourable for such a purpose.

The Constitution of 1990 and Pluralism: The Constitution of 1990, for the first time in history, has recognized the plural character of Nepali society. It is a significant departure from the past rulers' reluctance to acknowledge the existence of cultural difference within the Kingdom. A number of provisions of the constitution (Articles 11, 18, 26) therefore, together seek to protect the rights of individuals whilst respecting the value of diversity to the goal of national integration.

The constitution (article 2) defines the Nepali nation as "having common aspirations and united by a allegiance to national independence and integrity of Nepal, the Nepalese people irrespective of religion, race, caste or tribe collectively constitute the nation." This definition of nationhood acknowledges pluralism in the sense that the concept of nationhood does not require homogeneity in terms of social and cultural or religious unity. What is emphasized instead is commitment to the independence and integrity of the

country irrespective of religious, racial, sexual, caste or ethnic differences among the people.

The constitution recognizes Nepal as a multi-ethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and constitutional monarchical kingdom (article 4). This article clearly recognizes the diversity with the different ethnic and linguistic groups making up the Nepali nation but underestimates the religious plurality prevailing in the country by declaring Nepal as a Hindu kingdom. However, article 19 (1) declares that a person shall have the freedom to profess and practice his own religion as coming down to him from time immemorial with regard to the traditional customs, but no person shall be entitled to convert the religion of any other person. Article 19 (2) further states that any religious community shall be entitled to its independent existence according to law and shall have the right to manage and protect its religious places and trusts.

Though the constitution declares Nepali to be the national and official language of the country, article 18 (1&2) guarantees each community residing in Nepal the right to preserve and promote its language, script and culture. It also guarantees each community the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children.

The Constitution (Articles 3 & 4) also empowers the state to enact laws for the protection and advancement of the interests of those who belong to a class or group, which is economically, socially or educationally backward. Untouchability has been abolished. No person can be denied access to any public place or be deprived of the use of public facilities on the basis of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe, or ideology or any of them.

The constitution enlists several directive principles and state policies (Articles 25 & 26) intended to manage the caste and ethnic pluralism of the country. The state is advised to maintain the cultural diversity of the country. It is suggested to pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity by promoting healthy and cordial social relations among the various religions, castes, tribes, communities and linguistic groups, and by helping in the promotion of their languages, literatures, scripts, arts and culture. According to Article 26 (10) the state is required to pursue a policy which will help promote the interests of the economically and socially backward groups and communities by making special provisions with regard to their education, health and employment. Article 25 (3) mentions that the social objective of the state is to establish and develop, on the foundation of justice and

morality, a healthy social life, by eliminating all types of economic and social inequalities and by establishing harmony amongst the various caste, tribes, religions, languages, races and communities.

Thus, we may conclude that the constitutional provisions of accommodation of the country's diverse groups with the spirit of co-existence of various ethnic and cultural groups and a rational choice of political action within the constitutional framework is not in any way offensive to the democratization process undergoing in Nepal. What is lacking, however, is a strong leadership having a real commitment to implement such institutional provisions to accommodate the diverse groups in the country.

Emerging and Enduring Issues

The post-1990 period, popularly known as the 'democratic period' has witnessed the rise of issues related to cultural pluralism and diversity in Nepal. The restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 with ideals of meta-narratives (equality, liberty, social justice, and human rights) allowed many dissenting voices of different communities who had suffered discrimination at the hands of the state in the past to surface. Since then, there has been a growing politicization of ethnicity, regionalism, minority and *dalit* rights, accompanied by mounting public and academic debates on redefining the role of state and nature of governance in multicultural societies like Nepal⁴.

This section identifies and discusses the emerging and enduring issues of cultural pluralism and diversity in Nepal while dealing with its diverse groups of people. Specially, I shall discuss the issues of ethno-cultural cleavages, marginalized castes and ethnic groups, minorities, ethnicity and equitable or proportionate development as the leading issues of the country.

Ethno-Cultural Cleavages: Wherever may be the constitutional provision for accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity of the country, Dahal (1992) states that three main forms of ethnic divides are worthy of attention. The first is between the *pahade* (hill people) and the *madhise* (Tarai people) based on the regionalism and ethnicity. The second is the split between the high caste Hindu groups (particularly the Hill Brahman, Thakuri, Chhetri and Newar) and the so-called 'indigenous groups' or *janjati* of Nepal. The third is the split between the Brahman and Newar groups on the one hand, and the high caste Hindu groups and the low caste Hindu groups, on the other⁵.

Today, the Tarai is primarily inhabited by three major groups of people, namely the original inhabitants (e.g. Tharu, Dhimal), the people of 'Indian origin' (e.g. Yadav, Gupta, Shah) and the people of hill origin (e.g. Bahun, Chhetri, Magar, Gurung). The settlement of hill people in the Tarai increased rapidly following the malaria eradication program of the late 1950s and subsequent land resettlement programs of the government. Historically, neglect of the Tarai people by the hill-dominated government created an explosion of ethnic tension in the Tarai. Some Tarai leaders, particularly those representing the Hindu caste groups in the Nepal *Sadbhavana Party*, a Tarai based political party, have started a *pahadiya hatao* campaign to physically remove the hill people from the plains, which might be considered a disturbing trend in national politics. These leaders also advocate the use of Hindi as a link language in the Tarai, challenging Nepali, the national language of Nepal (see Dahal 1992).

The division between hill people and plain people also seems to be linked to the uncontrolled flow of Indian migrants crossing the border to settle in the Nepal Tarai. Because so many of the groups on either side of the border are culturally identical, it is difficult to differentiate between Nepali Tarai residents and Indian settlers. Daily familial, cultural and commercial interactions which take place between these groups further complicate matters (Bhattarai 2000). In recent years, more and more Indian workers have been coming into Nepal and settling with their wives and children. This could result in a problem of national identity among the Tarai people and fuel the suspicions of hill Nepalis concerning the allegiance of Tarai residents (Dahal 1992 and 1996).

Cleavages between the high caste Hindu groups and the *janajati* have also come to the forefront these days. The *janajatis* feel that the Hindu high caste people who have historically dominated Nepal's governments have always neglected them. They claim that they are the indigenous population of Nepal and demand a share of power in national politics and insist on the recognition of their cultural and linguistic rights. They consider themselves as non-Hindu groups; although the Hindu-dominated government of Nepal has always tried to incorporate them within the Hindu caste hierarchical model. The Hindu caste culture is considered as an 'alien culture' by the *janajatis*. Furthermore, the predominance of Brahmans in every field of life—political, economic, and social—is labelled as *bahunbad* and thus the Brahmans have been the subjects of attack in recent years in Nepal (Bista 1991; Sharma 1992 cited in Dahal 1996).

Likewise, Dahal (1996) asserts that social and political rivalry between the Newars and the Brahmins is creating serious problems for the nascent democratic structure of Nepal. Malla (1992) has clearly narrated the feeling of the Newars of Kathmandu Valley stating, "The 'outsiders', particularly the Parbatiyas (the hill people), the Madhesiyas (the plains people) and the Bhotiyas (the Mountain people), have gradually displaced Newars in their home". Newars actually claim that as they are the original inhabitants of the Valley, they should have access to all fields of Nepalese life—social, economic, and political. In fact, considering the present population size of Newars in Nepal (5.5% of the total population), Newars occupy the first position in Human Development Index (HDI=0.457) (Nepal Human Development Report 1998).

Finally, clashes between the high castes and the low castes are emerging rapidly. About 15 per cent of the total population of Nepal consists of untouchables. The New Legal Code, after its three decades of implementation, has not been effective in changing the socio-economic status of the untouchables, and they have the lowest social and the economic status compared to other groups in Nepal. As a consequence, they are raising voices organizing into several forums against the dominant Hindu castes (Dahal 1996).

The above discussion demonstrates that social, economic, and political conditions of Nepal over the years motivated people to show serious concern over their own ethnicity, race, caste, language, religion and region. This concern is being demonstrated more intensely and publicly after the restoration of democracy thus contradicting the assumption that democracy is the ultimate solution to all ethnic problems of Nepal. This also indicates that there is something wrong with democratic model that we have adopted.

The Nepali state, therefore, should play a constructive role of mutual empowerment rather than encouraging mutual apprehension in society. The ethnic blindness of the power elite is no longer a possibility under a constitutional framework that has recognized multiethnicity and multilingualism as bases of the country's reality. In addition, the constitution has opened opportunities for reforming and reconstituting the Nepali state as a cohesive society.

Issue of Marginalized Castes: The Dalits: *Dalits* are defined as those castes of people of Nepal who were categorized as untouchables in the Purano Muluki Ain (Old Civil Code of 1854) until the promulgation of Naya Muluki

Ain (New Civil Code of 1964). They have been placed at the bottom in the Hindu caste hierarchy (Jha 1998). The total population of *dalits* as reported in 2001 Census is around 15 percent of the total 23 millions population of Nepal but the *dalits* believe that their total population is actually at least one fifth of the total population of the country, that is, about 4.5 million (Bhattarai 2002).

They are the most marginalized caste groups in Nepal. A number of studies in Nepal in the past have shown that disadvantaged groups, particularly *dalits* have comparatively lower access to government institution and organization involved in development (e.g. agriculture and livestock development, forestry, health and education). They face excessive economic suppression and social exclusion that hinders them in accessing resources equitably and living a normal human life (Dahal and Mishra 1993; Sharma et al., 1994; Koirala 1996; Jha 1998; TEAM Consult, 1999; Bhattachan et al. 2001; Action-Aid 2002; and Dahal et al. 2002).

Dalits as a whole is the poorest community in Nepali Society. The average land owning per household among the *dalits* is 2.46 ropani of khet (irrigated land) and 4.5 ropani pakho (dry up land) land. Landlessness is acute among all *dalit* groups, but this is more acute among the Tarai *dalits*. About 50 % of the *dalits* households surveyed had the food deficiency (TEAM Consult 1998).

The educational status of *dalits* in Nepal is also very disappointing. The overall literacy rate of *dalits* was 22.8% in the 1991 census⁶ compared to national average of 39.6 percent. Male literacy was 33.9 % compared to only 12.0% of the female literacy rate among the *dalits*. The literacy rate of hill *dalits* is much higher, 27.0 % compared to only 11.0% of the Tarai *dalits*. Only 4.0 % female are literate among Tarai *dalits* compared to 14.7 % of the female literacy rate of hill *dalits*. However, the male literacy rate (40.2%) of the hill *dalits* is slightly above the national average. Of the total *dalits* enumerated in 1991 census, Musahar has the lowest literacy rate of 4.2 % whereas the highest is that of the Gaine (31.1%). Likewise the educational attainment of *dalits* (Primary, Secondary, SLC, Intermediate and above) is only 14.6% compared to 28.9 % of the national average.

Dalits in Nepal are not only economically marginalized but also discriminated by the high caste and *Janajati* groups in many areas of social, cultural and political life. They also face intra-*dalit* discrimination as well (Bhattachan et al. 2001). The caste based discrimination is observed in every day life of people and also noted in government offices, corporations, private

and NGOs. They don't feel socially equal with these groups of people. Even today, they have no courage to protest such discriminatory behaviors and they reluctantly accept these things as their fate (Dahal et al. 2002).

Dalits are oppressed even from other oppressed group while in case of *dalit* women besides being oppressed from rest of the society they face gender discrimination within their community as well (Lawoti 2000). *Dalits* face cultural discrimination also because even though they may share the language and religion with 'upper caste' Hindus, they have different cultural attributes, due to their extreme exclusion and domination. The *Madhesi dalits* face linguistic discrimination as well because they do not speak Nepali as their mother tongue (Bhattarai 2000). Tables 2.1 & 2.2 make clear the actual situation of *dalits* in Nepal

The table 2.2 clearly indicates that *dalit's* participation in the political, administrative, academic and judicial fields of Nepali state is very low or almost nil. Their representation in these domains is rather insignificant compared to their population size of about 3.5 millions. This situation is directly contradictory to the provisions of the democratic Constitution of 1990. In the directive principle and policies of the state, article 26 (10) asserts that the state shall adopt a policy of raising the standard of the socially and economically backward tribes and communities by making special provision with regard to their education, health and employment.

Despite the government's efforts for the *dalit* upliftment over the years (such as the introduction of New Legal Code of 1964, the Constitution of 1990, specific policies in the Eight and Ninth Five Year Plans, establishment of Dalit Vikas Samity in 1997 and more recently established National Dalit Commission (March 2002) with objectives of high level policy making and programme formulation for *dalit* enhancement) and proliferation of many NGOs and INGOs in enhancing the quality of life of *dalit* (social, economic, political and health condition) condition of the *dalits* has not improved much

In Nepal, adoption of the *pahade* upper caste Hindu Ideology by the state and defining rights and duties of citizens and the state based on it has universalized those values and rendered other value system invisible (Lawoti 2000). Some caste groups who were culturally marginalized got excluded from influential positions in other realms in the state and society because the cultural attributes became the main criteria for obtaining those positions. The economic impact of such cultural imperialism probably felt most severely by the *dalits*.

Despite being an industrious community that supported the society by providing farming tools, clothes, shoes, hides, jewelry and so on, the *dalits* always suffered from economic exploitation. Their tools were never upgraded and improved by creating and sustaining the competitive advantages of their product. Rather they were assigned the lowest social position and deprived of power, knowledge and a dignified social status (Dahal, forthcoming). The caste system that rendered the group politically and socially weak denied them the opportunity to negotiate appropriate price for their skills and products with their high-caste clients. Even today the *dalits* face discrimination in economic opportunities because they are effectively denied from the operating business in many arenas such as food line, and getting employed, as peons since many 'upper caste' do not take food touched by *dalits* (Lawoti 2000).

The policy of reservation to *dalits* in public offices, education and public employment may address the problem of unequal access to resources. But it is urgent to promote and encourage social integration of low castes or *dalits* with the general population whether in conducting trainings, forming groups, discussion with communities, excursions, hiring of staff, eating in groups etc. In addition, it is equally important to initiate a process by which the general population gradually accepts them as equal members of society (CARE 1996). Then only, the idea of reservation to *dalits* might work effectively.

Issue of Marginalized Groups: The Janajatis: The term *janajatis* has been used in Nepal to designate the non-Hindu groups who have their distinct culture and languages or the groups who are also referred as 'tribes' in anthropological writings on Nepal. However, the category of *janajatis* does not include non-Hindus groups like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others.

It is important to realize that *dalits* or low castes are not the only ones to be socially discriminate and marginalized though they do form the majority in this group (CARE 1996). There are several examples of other groups such as bonded laborers prevailing among the Tharus of far west under the *kamaiya* system, and a number of small tribal groups such as *Chepangs*, *Rautes*, *Satars*, *Danuvars*, and *Kusundas* who are surviving in a marginalized condition (Bista 1967, Mabuhang 1999).

The practices of *Kamaiya* system, despite the declarations of their liberation by the government in 2000, has forced a large number of Tharus in the far west to live almost as slaves working for landlords without wage in

order to pay back debts incurred both during their lifetime and those of two or three generation ago. Even those who have been liberated face dire living conditions, as the government has not initiated resettlement programs for them. Despite provisions in the Constitution that did not permit any form of slavery, the Kamaiya were not freed from their servitude for a decade even after the restoration of democracy. The Kamaiya case demonstrates lack of apathy of the ruling group towards issues of indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups in the country. Many Tharus were made bonded labor after being displaced from their land and territory by new migrants. The state policies of encouraging new settlements in the *Tarai* and cutting down forests for settling migrants were primarily responsible for displacing the Tharus from their traditional territories. Conversion of communally accessed forests into individually owned cultivated lands speeded the process of uprooting of the Tharus from their traditional habitat. The government did not recognize the Tharus' communal rights on lands and forests. It facilitated the displacement process.

Then, there are some groups scattered in pockets across the country who have been facing dire consequences in terms of discrimination, because of their small population as well as due to historic and current discriminatory treatment by the state and society. Imposition of dominant cultural values on these peoples has threatened their culture and traditions and Hindu religious hegemony has rendered other religious groups and customs vulnerable. The attempt of Hindu fundamentalists to encompass folk religions within its fold is deplorable because it refuses to recognize the separate religious identity of these peoples (Lawoti 2001). Promotion of one language, one religion, one dress and mono-cultural nationalism by the state not only hurt the culture of these peoples but it effectively marginalized them in economic, political and social realms (Bhattachan 1995). Some scholars have termed this phenomenon of imposition of dominant values, norms, and traditions on other communities of the society as cultural imperialism, which continues even today in lesser degree and in less explicit manner. These peoples face cultural imperialism because the state and society promotes the *pahade* culture. The Constitution and laws of the country also do not recognize equal status of non-Hindu groups and ways of lifestyle and practices (Lawoti 2000).

These groups until recently have been practicing semi-nomadic living roaming around the forest. The general population therefore, regards them as less "civilized". Consequently they are subject to exploitation in the hands of

their more "civilized" counterpart. The Rautes in the west, Chepangs in the central, and Meches in the east are some of the examples of such groups, in addition to other similar groups such as Danuwars and Chhantyals falling into the same category (CARE 1996). Their access to state and societal resources is also extremely limited in comparison to other ethnic and caste groups. Scholar like Caplan (1970) argues that these groups were economically marginalized by confiscation of their community land by upper caste people with state backing. The impact of these processes is still felt today as land and ancestral property, which these people normally lack, provide capital and properties that can be mortgaged for economic activities.

Similar to *dalits*, government policies and programmes have largely ignored these peoples. The government attitude seems to formulate universal programmes and policies for education and poverty alleviation. These have largely benefited the dominant group members rather than these people.

Issue of Minorities: Generally, the minority groups are defined by their powerlessness relative to other groups in a society, and majority groups are the reverse: they dominate other groups. The use of 'minority-majority' category exists only with reference to inter-group relationships of different groups in society. Eriksen (1993:121) has argued that the twin concepts of majority and minority are *relative* and *relation*. A minority exists only in relation to a majority and vice versa, and their relationship is contingent on the relevant system boundaries. In the contemporary world, these systems boundaries are nearly always state boundaries. So, the majority group/minority group concepts signify their sociological meanings only in power relations between different groups in local, regional and national level corresponding their social, cultural, economic and political positions.

Thus, it can be inferred that a majority-minority group relation implies a hierarchical relationship of dominance and subjugation, and the definitions of 'minority' encompass the group's distinct cultural or physical characteristics or social weakness as basis for discrimination and exclusion. The population size of such group may not be the necessary attributes for the group's delineation as 'minority'.

Nepal provides an interesting case with regard to the issues of minority group for no single group out of more than 100 caste and ethnic groups, is in numerical majority. Strictly speaking, all the Nepalese population groups are minorities (see annex 1). But in public discourse, the high caste *pahade*

Table 2.1 Human Development by Caste and Ethnicity, 1996

Category	Bahun	Chhetri	Newar	Madhesi	Janajati	Dalit	Nepal
Life Expectance	60.8	56.3	62.2	58.4	53.0	50.3	55.0
Adult Literacy Rate (%)	58.0	42.0	54.8	27.5	35.2	23.8	36.27
Mean Year of Schooling	4.7	2.8	4.4	1.7	2.0	1.2	2.3
Per Capita Income (NRS)	9927	7744	11953	6911	6607	4940	7673
Per Capita PPP Income (US\$)	1533	1197	1848	1068	1021	764	1186
Life Expectance Index	0.957	0.522	0.620	0.557	0.467	0.422	0.500
Educational Attainment Index	0.490	0.342	0.462	0.221	0.280	0.186	0.295
Income Index	0.237	0.181	0.289	0.160	0.152	0.110	0.179
Human Development Index	0.444	0.348	0.456	0.313	0.299	0.239	0.325
Ratio to HDI Nepal = 100	135.9	107.3	140.7	96.3	92.2	73.6	1000

Source: NESAC, 1998

Table 2.2 Integrated National Index of Governance, 1999

Institutions	Bahun & Chhetri	Janajati	Madhesi	Dalit	Newar	Others	Total
Courts	181	4	18	0	32		235
Constitutional bodies	14	2	3	0	6		25
Cabinet	20	4	5	0	3		32
Parliament	159	36	46	4	20		265
Public Administration	190	3	9	0	43		245
Parties Leadership	97	25	26	0	18		165
Leadership: local elected bodies	106	23	31	0	30		191
Leadership: Industry & commerce	7		15	0	20		42
Leadership: educational sectors	75	2	7	1	11	1	97
Leadership: cultural arena	85	6	0	0	22		123
Science/Technology	36	2	6	0	18	0	62
Civil Society Leadership	41	1	4	0	8	0	54
Total	1011	108	170	5	231		1520
Percentage	66.5	7.1	11.2	.3	15.2		100
Population %	31.6	22.2	30.9	15	5.6	.1	100
Difference %	+34.9	-15.1	-19.7	-8.4	+9.6	-1	

Source: Neupane, 2000

Hindus are usually referred as the dominant group in the sense that they are enjoying better access to state and societal resources. Most of the ethnic groups (*janajatis*), *dalits* and the people of Tarai origin (*madhesis*) are treated as marginal on two major grounds: one is their disadvantaged position in national human development index and, the other lower representation in integrated national governance index (table 2.1 & 2.2). From this reason minorities in Nepal can be defined in terms of domination or oppression: culturally and/ or in terms of access to societal and state resources.

The table 2.1 & 2.2 show that the difference exists between different caste and ethnic groups and by regional basis. To some extent, ethnic categories correspond to the actual division of societal resources: the high caste Bahun and Chhetri, along with high caste Newar population, share among themselves the block of governmental and political position. Similarly, inequalities are displayed if we take account of the literacy and educational status, income level, health and incidence of poverty. The *dalits*, *janajatis* and *madhesis* are at the bottom of the Human Development Index (table 2.1)

Similarly, Neupane (2000) has evidently demonstrated that the elite Hindu caste *Bahun and Chhetri* and elite Newar are enjoying better access to resources and are occupying a majority position in relation to the rest of the people. The former two groups are ruling groups whereas Newar community has done well in accessing resources despite facing cultural discrimination. The Newar's entrepreneurial skills in trade and commerce, their specialized knowledge and skills in administration and residence in the capital are responsible for their better performance compared to other indigenous peoples. Jointly these communities were holding more than 81.7% leadership positions in important areas of governance such as judiciary, executive, legislature, and public administration etc. in 1999. This situation, a legacy of the past, has not improved even after the advent of multiparty democracy and implementation of the pro-poor and disadvantaged groups focused state interventions via the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-1997) and at the end of the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) and other interventions (NPC 1992 & 1997).

Cultural discrimination on the basis of casteism, ethnicity, religion, language, regionalism, etc., is equally an inherent phenomenon of statehood and creation of minorities in Nepal. For the last two and half centuries, the ruling elite of Nepal - hill high caste Hindus and their cultural ethos (religion, language, etc.) have been adopted by the state and promoted as the Nepali national culture. Ethnic groups, the so-called 'low caste' *dalits*, Muslims, and

other non-Hindus religious groups have been critical of their continuous exclusion and subjugation. They have been demanding equitable participation and representation (including cultural) in the national mainstream for many decades. Similarly, the plights of the Tarai people- their subordinated position irrespective of their caste/ethnicity and religious background in the state dominated by the hill people and hill culture have been strongly assertive and their movements for ending this discrimination is equally significant in Nepal.

However, from the state point of view there is no official definition and recognition of 'minority groups' as such in Nepal. Concepts like 'backward' and 'oppressed', and 'downtrodden' are interchangeably used to designate some special disadvantaged groups like *dalits*, *janajatis* (nationalities/ethnic groups/tribes) and indigenous peoples in official documents and in the present Constitution of Nepal (HMG 1990). These concepts are used in political neutral sense as they are conveyed or understood more in terms of 'economic backwardness' or 'social backwardness' rather than in the fullest sense of the historical and present discriminations against these groups.

Issue of Politicization of Ethnicity: Ethnicity is regarded as one of the vital aspect of relationship among groups. It is basically concerned with the idea of distinctiveness, the 'them' and 'us' dichotomy, and distinctiveness on claimed basis of share origin and common cultural characteristics (Barth, 1969). Paul Brass (1991) has defined the concept ethnicity as the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people of any aspect of culture in order to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups. He further asserts that in political arena ethnicity can operate at two levels: a. as an interest group to improve the well-being of group members as individuals, and/or b. go further and demand that corporate rights be conceded to the group as a whole. While the former may include demands related to economic well-being, civil rights, educational opportunities and the like, the latter may extend to demanding 'a major say for the group in the political system as a whole or control over a piece of territory within the country or they demand a country for their own full sovereignty. Though in lesser degree of magnitude, a similar trend of politicization of ethnicity, especially after 1990 has been observed in Nepal.

In spite of some flaws, the new Constitution of Nepal (1990) has created space for the development of a greater political consciousness of the various ethnic groups. A number of ethnic organizations had already come-up during

the eighties (only a few ethnic organizations had been found before 1979) but after the restoration of democracy in 1990 the number of such organizations increased rapidly. It has gained momentum by the steadily growing self-consciousness of the various ethnic groups. They remember their own cultural values, even though these may be interpreted by the current ethnic elites in a way different from the traditional one. The growing politicization of the ethnic organizations is prominent, even though their leaders always emphasize their mere cultural intentions. In this context, it is striking that the ethnic organizations call their group *nations*. Some organizations even go as far as demanding a more or less territorial independence from the Nepali state, mostly in connection with the call for a federal state. These demands are still forwarded with little militancy, but the articulation is getting more and more aggressive.

In order to defend their position and to achieve their goals in the near future, a closer collaboration among them is of great importance. As a result, *Nepal Janajati Mahasangh* (Nepal Federation of Nationalities or NEFEN) was formed in July 1990, which has been working as an umbrella organization for 42 ethnic associations (Gellner 1997). The word *janajati* often criticized by some other organizations is translated as *nationalities* by the member organizations of the Mahasangh. They stand for revival and saving of the traditional cultures and values of their ethnic groups (Kraemer 1994). The membership in the Mahasangh is open to all ethnic groups and organizations but not to the Hindu castes including the so-called "untouchables" (even though the latter are discriminated against in a similar way). Christian and Muslim organizations are also excluded. Thus, the concept ethnic group has been used in Nepal to designate the non-Hindu groups who have their distinct culture and languages excluding non-Hindu groups like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others.

Besides these organizations, which fight for the rights of their ethnic groups in a reasonable way, there are a number of other organizations, which show greater militancy. Organizations like Limbuwan Mukti Morcha, Khambuwani Mukti Morcha (a Rai-organization), Madhise Mukti Morcha (a Taraian organization) and Tamang Saling Mukti Morcha already use the word Mukti (liberation) in their names and thus signal their readiness to adopt more aggressive methods. Their avowed goal is the creation of autonomous regions along the boundaries of the traditional areas of their ethnic and regional groups.

Other organizations trying to represent various ethnic groups like the Mongol National Organization under the leadership of Gopal Gurung head in the same direction. Gopal Gurung sees his organization as a political party that has not been recognized by the Election Commission in the run-up to the general elections of 1991 under the pretension of communal orientation. Referring to this a complaint about infringement of the constitution is still pending and has not gone beyond any further hearings (Hangen 1999).

There was no official distinction between caste and ethnic group prior to 1990. In the past, there was an attempt to define ethnic group in narrower sense as people of 'backward' 'uncivilized' community with 'primitive' subsistence pattern. But now after many years of ethnic activism, the government has approved the definition of 'ethnic group' and recognized 61 groups as ethnic groups of Nepal in 1996. Accordingly, ethnic groups are now recognized as 'nationalities' of Nepal, and nationalities are defined as 'those who have their own mother language and traditional culture but who do not fall under the traditional four-fold Varna classifications of Hindu Varna system' (National Committee for Development of Nationalities (NCDN) 2000). Further, the *nationalities* are those ethnic communities having the following characteristics:

- Those who have distinct cultural identities;
- who have their traditional languages, religions, and customs and cultures;
- whose social fabrics are based on equality;
- those who have their own geographical and demographical areas in the country;
- those who have written and / or oral traditions known;
- those who have notion of "We/Us";
- those ethnic groups who have no pivotal or decisive roles to play and exercise in the polity and administration of modern Nepal;
- those who are the indigenous or native people of Nepal, and
- those who call themselves ethnic people.

Today, ethnic groups claim that they have been exploited; displaced from traditional land and resources; culture of ruling high caste group have been imposed upon them; state apparatus; were given inferior caste ranking; excluded from the economy and polity, etc. The plights of the ethnic groups, they claim, have not been addressed effectively even after the advent of the multiparty democracy. They refute the claims by the state that it is guided by

the principle of equality, social justice and democracy; and they see the dominance of the 'high caste groups' as the 'undeclared state policy of reservations' for the traditional power elite in the democratic set-up. For them, Nepal's transition to democracy has not addressed the aspirations of the ethnic groups to mainstream their cultural identity and their rights to be different in a multicultural nation-state have so far been denied.

Thus, the development of ethnic consciousness and ethnic identity, according to the ethnic activists and leaders are product of the domination of the ruling caste groups. Cultural identity has always been a basis of group identity thereby of identity of its members. Kinship, language, religious ethos, common history, territoriality, culture practices etc, are significant anchors of one's ethnic identity and play important role in fostering collective sense of one's group as well as individual identity. These ethnic ascriptions cannot be simply subsumed as 'primordial ties' (Geertz 1963) or 'instrumentalist' i.e. emphasis of ethnic distinctiveness to gain some political goals (Gellner 1997:7). Ethnic identity in Nepal is also result of a real historical rivalry (Gaenszle 2000 cited in Lawati 2001). The designation of all ethnic groups of Nepal as Nationalities and indigenous peoples since 1990s to separate themselves from the Hindu groups i.e. the ruling groups and ruling cultural ideology also symbolizes the historical rivalry between the dominant and sub-ordinate groups.

The issues of cultural discriminations, subjugation to the Hindu domination, exclusion from the state decision making processes and socio-economic deprivations of the ethnic groups are the major core 'issues' being raised by the ethnic groups and their organizations to demand for the protection of their culture and political rights. Lawati (2001) asserts that ethnic groups in Nepal are facing multiple forms of discriminations (socio-cultural, constitutional, legal and other forms of discriminations). He identifies: Linguistic discrimination; religious discrimination; abolishment of land rights; Cultural Imperialism; Legal discriminations (as many as 25 constitutional provisions and 40 common and special laws are identified as being discriminatory to ethnic/indigenous groups); tampering and manufacturing of the census data; discrimination in access to resources; exclusion in participation in politics and administration; economic vulnerability; misrepresentation and ignorance of media; discrimination in Public Policy, Budgeting and Implementation of Programs and Ignorance of Ethnic/indigenous issues by the Human Rights Groups, as the major forms of discriminations towards indigenous and ethnic minorities in Nepal.

Kumar (2000) claims that ethnic articulation in Nepal has neither a content of secession nor an urge to replace the dominance of state power by a particular ethnic group but the demand of sharing of state power equitably with distributive justice in a multiethnic society. In other words, ethnic politics in Nepal is against the excessive centralization of the state power in the hands of the few that has continued to weaken the social fabric of the state. Such articulations are primarily the manifestation of the sense of denial of the rightful place to the citizenry as a whole (Gurr 1993, 1997); the perception of oppression of the "indigenous voices" (Wilmer 1993) for long through state's deliberate design of assimilation in the name of "national integration" (Birch 1978 cited in Kumar 2000). Their demands are related to the process of reorienting the social forces (Migdal 1994) to secularize the state, which provides the latter with the needful societal cohesion and coherence to build a multicultural and multinational, pluralistic state in its contents and meaning (Kumar 2000).

Thus, ethnicity may act as a trigger for violent conflict only when it is mobilized and manipulated to do so. There are many policy approaches to accommodate ethnic diversity. Constitutional formula, different types of electoral system, decentralization and devolution of power, bill of rights are some of them. Attempts of national building through making all groups homogeneous have already been failed. Ethnic revivalists, in Nepal, therefore have a common plea to abandon the assimilation or melting pot policy of one nation, one religion, one language and one culture and demand to create a sense of the nation as a civic community, rooted in values that can be shared by all diverse groups of the national society. Such a sense of community is best achieved if the concept of 'nation- state' is freed from any connotations of ethnic exclusiveness.

Issue of Disproportionate Development: Disparity among the diverse castes, ethnic, religious and regional groups is the core issue of current development discourse in Nepal. Various human development reports have clearly shown these facts. It is invariably the case that, the lower the caste, the lower is the life expectancy, literacy rate, years of schooling, and per capita income among the people in general (table 2.1). The women, *dalits*, and ethnic minorities in particular are more underprivileged in this regard. Women among them are the most deprived groups. They are not yet economically independent. They have either to depend upon people belonging to high castes or to their male counter parts. More importantly,

they have marginal existence in the spheres of politics and other public domains of decision-making. In spite of four decades of development efforts, poverty remains high and the incidence is pervasive for some particular groups.

The notion of development in any plural society must encompass the cultural factors into account. The development regime, thus embraces not only access to goods and services but also the opportunity to choose a full, satisfying, valuable and valued way of living together, the flourishing of human existence in all its form and as a whole—i.e. taking into account of cultural diversity. However, the relevant question now is: development for what and for whom? The first part of the question focuses on a holistic and integrated perspective on development, and the second emphasizes a people-oriented approach.

Since the development process must ensure the participation of people at the grass root level and take cognition of their perceptions and felt needs, the question of development has to be closely linked to cultural policy. The cultural policy in respect of development needs to be embedded in the framework of cultural pluralism and democratic decentralization. A consequence of the above is that a policy, which seeks to impose unitary solutions regardless of regional variations and cultural specificities, will prove to be counter-productive. Thus, though the policy for development needs to be attuned to national interests and aspirations, it might be wrong effort to ignore the culture-specific dimensions of development.

Thus, the notion of development in a plural country like Nepal should be viewed considering the existing cultural diversity, variations and national identity, which demand a cultural policy of development to comprehend these realities. The issue of national unity and integration is also closely intertwined with the cultural policy. A policy of integration, which disregards cultural pluralism and the composite character of Nepali society and seeks to impose uniformity, homogenization and regimentation on the country's heterogeneous population, has already been proved to be self-defeating. What is required is a humane vision of integration which would take due recognition of Nepal's pluralistic ethos and at the same time strengthen the long-standing bonds and inter-linkages among the people, especially at the grass root level. Nepali society is to be seen, as a honeycomb in which communities are engaged in vibrant interaction, sharing space, ethos and cultural traits, using an evocative metaphor.

In order to accomplish an equitable development, the development regime must be linked to national culture or the cultural identity of a nation, especially when a nation is composed of diverse ethnic/ caste groups with differences in race, language, religion and culture. For this, the government must adopt cultural policies of development incorporating various threads of cultures scattered from the east to the west of the country. In addition, since most of the Nepali people feel that they do not share adequately in the economy, polity and social life, a right-based economic policy might be an alternative approach to deal the economic and cultural disparities among the people.

Thus, we may say that the interface of development and cultural identity in the Nepalese context has two interrelated dimensions: the national, on the one hand, and regional-cultural, on the other. At both the macro and micro levels, the development process needs to be addressed and guided by the pluralistic and composite ethos of Nepali society.

Some Models of Ethnic and Cultural Accommodation

The discussion above, clearly indicates that the increasing awareness and snowballing sense of frustrations among the diverse groups of the country. This ultimately demonstrates the inadequacy of the conventional mode of ethnic and cultural accommodation and the dominant paradigm of national building process aimed at creating monolithic and homogenous Nepali national identity. Moreover, given the pluralistic and heterogeneous nature of Nepali society and the multiple identities that characterize its people and their culture will produce unpredictable complication in future. Accordingly, the managing of diversity and difference for the purpose of nation building is indeed a tremendous challenge for all.

Nathan Galzer and Michale Walger (1995) have proposed two broad frameworks or models for accommodating ethno-cultural diversity. One model rests on the 'non-discrimination principle' where as the other model involves public measures aimed at protecting or promoting ethno-cultural identities in a plural society or State (Kymlicka 1995).

The Non-discrimination Model: The first model is known as "non-discrimination model" and views that cultural identity should neither be supported nor penalized by public policy. Rather, the expression and perpetuation of cultural identities should be left to the private sphere. However, members of each ethnic and cultural group are protected against

discrimination and prejudice and allowed to maintain their ethnic heritage and identity consistent with the rights of the others. But their efforts are purely private and it is the space of public or government agencies to attach legal identities or disabilities to cultural memberships or ethnic identity (Kymlicka 1995:9). According to Walzer, "non-discriminatory model" involves a sharp divorce of the state and ethnicity. The state stands above all the various ethnic and national groups in the country refusing to endorse or support their ways of life or to take an active interest in their social reproduction. Furthermore, the state is neutral with reference to the language, history, literature, and calendar of these groups. Supporters of this model exemplify USA as an example (Ibid.).

But is it possible to find a 'neutral state' in this regard? Every country must make decision about government language, school curricula, and neutralization policies. They must also make decision about public holidays, and national symbols. In reality, the neutral state is seen as a system of 'group rights' that supports the majority's language, history, culture, and calendar. Even in USA, for example, government policy systematically encourages everyone to learn English, which is the language of public schools, court proceedings, and of welfare agencies. Immigrants to the USA are required to learn English before acquiring citizenship. However, the model can be taken as "non-discriminatory", in the sense that minorities are not discriminated against within the mainstream institutions of majority culture, but it is not 'neutral' in its relationship to cultural identities (Kymlicka 1995:10). Thus, the non-discrimination model is appropriate whenever the government aims at integrating disparate groups into a single national culture, based on a common language

The Group Rights Model: On the contrary, the second model involves public measures aimed at protecting and promoting the existing social and cultural diversity. These measures, according to Galzer (1995 cited in Kymlicka 1995)) include language rights, regional autonomy, land claims, guaranteed representation and so on. Galzer calls it the "group right model". This model demands that the government identify specific groups and enforce special legal provision or endorse certain privileges to them in order to promote and protect their cultural heritage and identities. He further argues that 'the group right model is appropriate if a society operates on the assumption that it is a confederation of groups, that group membership is central and permanent, and that the division between groups are such that it is

unrealistic or unjust to envisage these group identities weakening in time to be replaced by a common citizenship'. Then, the choice between non-discrimination and group rights is really a choice between forming a common national culture, and accepting the permanent existence of two or more national cultures within a national culture.

Most of the minorities in Nepal are territorially concentrated and are either settled or attached emotionally on their historic homeland (Bista 1971; Gurung 1989; Bhattachan 1996). These groups find themselves in a minority position, not because they have uprooted themselves from their homeland, but their homeland has been incorporated within the boundaries of a larger state. This incorporation is usually involuntary, resulting from unification/ conquest, or ceding of territory from one imperial power to another. Under these circumstances, minorities are rarely satisfied with non-discrimination and eventual integration. What they desire is 'self determination' – that is some forms of local self-government, in order to ensure the continued development of their distinct culture and identities (Pfaff Cazerneka 1999).

Inclusive Democracy Model: In Nepal, advocates of pluralism put responsibility on the state to abandon assimilationist policies and adopt policies that recognize cultural difference. They argued that all cultural or ethnic groups of a plural society like Nepal want their cultural experiences and contributions to be recognized in the public spheres through sensitising public institution to their cultural and linguistic difference. However, their arguments in favor of pluralism or multiculturalism and recognition of difference aim to improve, not undermine, social cohesion by providing minority groups with the cultural security they require in order to maintain their distinct cultural identities and to integrate successfully into the majority societies of which they are the part (Bhattarai 2000):

But there always remains a fear that the more the state becomes involved in the recognition and regulation of ethnic minorities, the more groups must craft their interests and even their identities in terms of categories to which the state is likely to respond (Eisenberg 2000). In this sense, the state might not be neutral about the worth of different cultural values and therefore may prove to be an inadequate adjudicator and regulator of cultural power in the multicultural state (Kymlicka, 2000). Keeping this reality in mind, minority people have started to demand constitutional guaranty for protecting minorities and their rights. Including all these reactions, Lawoti (2001:4)

following Arend Lijphart (1999) has proposed another model which could be called as "inclusive democracy" model. An inclusive democracy model is basically derived from the following four assumptions (Human Development Report, 2000).

An inclusive democracy built on the principle that political power is dispersed and shared in a variety of ways- to protect minorities and to ensure participation and free speech for all citizens.

It emphasizes the quality of representation by striving for consensus and inclusion, not the electoral force of majority.

It also appreciates the need to promote civil society organizations, open media, right-orientated economic policy, and separation of power.

It creates mechanism for the accountability of majority to the minorities.

The Human Development Report 2000 states that the majoritarian model of democracy fails to protect the rights of minorities in many instances where as the consensual or the inclusive model of democracy has effectively protected minority rights. In inclusive democracy, incorporating minority groups requires a more enlightened view of sharing economic and political resources than simple majoritarian democracy. A precondition for building an inclusive democracy is ensuring right to elect representatives and development of a legal framework that protects the right to participation and free expression.

The inclusive democracy model for managing pluralism in Nepal proposes electoral reforms, constitutional protection of minorities, federalism, Nationalities' Upper House, self-determination, and other accommodative governance structure of inclusive institutions. These institutions can contribute towards equitable resources distribution as well, apart from ensuring recognition of different cultural groups (Lawoti 2001).

Supporters of this model argue that instead of adopting consensual institutions found successful in culturally plural democracies like Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, India, Papua New Guinea, Germany, Austria etc., a highly culturally diverse society like Nepal has adopted the Westminster, or the majoritarian, model of democracy, found successful only in homogenous societies. They further emphasize that consensual political institution like federalism, some form of proportional representation, balanced bicameralism (more or less equal division of power), constitutional

guarantee of minority rights are needed to enhance power sharing, accommodation and inclusion. In other words, culturally plural societies like in Nepal, equality can be achieved not by eliminating group difference but rather by ensuring equality among different groups.

However, in practical ground, the issues of ethnicity, minority or marginalized caste cannot be seen separately from the broader societal problems facing the Nepali society. Nepal is a plural state, with a vast majority of its population living under the same precarious condition. Policy makers seeking to enhance the situation of the Nepalese must take into account the fact that despite ethnic differences or even cleavages, solution aimed at improving the living condition of all underprivileged groups whatever their cultural background, are urgently necessary.

Searching for New Paradigms

The issues of plural or polyethnic nation as discussed above could be approached from a different perspective, focusing on shared meaning rather than group difference. This perspective assumes that Nepali nation may be depicted as identical with the 'mosaic of cultures' that it embodies, and locates nationhood to the interface between the constituent ethnic or cultural groups and their mutual respect. Similarly, from this perspective, Nepali nation could be portrayed as supra-ethnic or non-ethnic community, which encompasses or transcends ethnicity, regionalism, rather than endorsing them. This perspective perceives the country as a 'wild garden where hundreds of flower blossom'. One of the important issues, however, is the question of how particular ethnic cultures can contribute to the process of forging the new notion of the Nepali nation under conditions of multiculturalism.

We have to acknowledge that each society has its own particular character and history of pluralism and accordingly there will be different understandings of pluralism in different contexts. Yet, pluralism is an issue that needs to be addressed at the personal, social, cultural and political levels. In personal level it is about who we are and how we define ourselves. In social level it concerns about how we interact with each other. We need to address pluralism at cultural level because it inevitably involves our beliefs, ideas and understandings. In political level, the accommodation of pluralism involves the distribution of power and access to resources. For this reason, we need to find out the role of both the State and civil society in dealing with the issues of pluralism. The most outstanding problem that we need to

address is how to unite a nation, which consists of more than hundred castes and ethnic groups, with diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds. This diversity demands a symbol, or a frame of reference, acceptable for the whole population, which really able to play the function as a basis for the development of the national identity.

McKim Marriott (1963) has proposed a solution to accommodate diverse groups of a plural nation by implementing an appropriate policy of cultural management. For this, he has suggested that each newly emerging nation-state should be 'clothed in a cultural grab symbolic of its aims and ideal being' that could anchor different cultural groups into a single national frame with mutual respect and dignity. Choosing of an appropriate form of culture, dealing with cultural verity within the state, finding a suitable orientation of time, and relating to internal to external cultures are the major issues of cultural management that any plural country should take into account while enforcing the cultural policy.

A plural society then must find ways of developing a strong sense of mutual commitment and common belonging without insisting upon a shared comprehensive national culture and the concomitant uniformity of values, ideals and ways of organizing significant social relations. It needs to derive its unity not from cultural uniformity but cultural diversity and which should not resent and fear cultural differences but turn them into sources of strength. Its unity is strong like that of any nation state, but it is derived differently and has a very different nature and texture (Parekh n.d.) Once this basic cultural paradigm is accepted, the concept of majority/minority culture would either loss its luster or gradually become meaningless. The religious, linguistic, racial and caste identities would no longer simply remain "ethnic identities" but submerge into a new national identity of the people (Dahal 1995).

The plural nation like Nepal can make congruent unity and diversity only if it does not confuse unity with uniformity and seek comprehensive cultural uniformity among its diverse groups. It should evolve its unity out of its diversity by encouraging its cultural communities to evolve a "plural national culture" that both reflects and transcends them. Such a pluralistically constituted and constantly evolving common culture both unites them and gives them secure spaces for growth. Since different communities have helped create it, they are able to identify with it, and can be expected to feel both attached to and proud of it. The plural national culture should permeate ali areas of life and shape its overall ethos (ibid). In this way, Nepali state could gradually develop a pan-Nepali identity in which every one can pride

while at the same time allowing local variation to flourish. In essence, it means that a Newar is able to maintain his/her distinct local identity while at the same time he/she could feel pride to attach his identity with Nepali state. This requires the government to reorient its policy towards a politics of social inclusion and thus, mutual empowerment (Bhattarai 2001)

In most societies, however, the ethnic and cultural composition of population is changing and there is often an awakening of ethnic identities within the demography setting. So, there is no particular model that can be applied in all circumstances, and we need to adopt a flexible approach. The civil society organizations have the advantage of being flexible, creative and able to promote inter-group, inter-cultural dialogue through their network to address the challenges of cultural diversity and pluralism.

The challenge today is to develop a framework that insures that the current developments are integrative and that are best practice institution built on genuine commitment to being inclusive. This means securing the right of the diverse people to their resource base and its produce enforce by the state. It implies that the adoption of educational system that embody mutual respect, including the right to use their own language at different levels of schooling. It also means giving them full access to modern instruments of information, communication, technology and advice, and assuring their right to decide their own priorities in peaceful cooperation with each others.

Conclusions

Nepal remained a cultural mosaic forming a unique kind of multi-ethnic and caste society, throughout its history. There are more than 100 distinct ethnic/caste groups, who have lived side by side for the past two millenniums maintaining separate yet related cultural traditions of their own. However, past efforts of cultural and ethnic accommodation were not free from controversy.

The increasing self-consciousness and growing sense of political, cultural and economic marginalization among minorities clearly demonstrate the inadequacy of the conventional paradigm of ethnic and cultural accommodation aimed at creating monolithic and homogenous Nepali national identity. Moreover, given the pluralistic and heterogeneous nature of Nepali society and the multiple identities that characterize its people and culture might produce unpredictable complication in future. Thus, the managing of diversity and difference for the purpose of nation building is indeed a tremendous challenging job for all.

Taking account of the volume of current issues of ethno-cultural cleavages, marginalization of castes, ethnic groups and minorities, politicization of ethnicity and inequitable or disproportionate development, it is urgent to search alternative ways to deal with cultural diversity and the problems of variations. One such perspective could be developed by focusing on shared meaning and identities rather than group difference. Such perspective assumes that Nepali nation may be depicted as identical with the 'mosaic of cultures' that it embodies, and locates nationhood to the interface between the constituent ethnic or cultural groups and their mutual respect. Similarly, from this perspective, Nepali nation could be portrayed as supra-ethnic or non-ethnic community, which encompasses or transcends ethnicity, regionalism, rather than endorsing them. For this, Nepal should adopt more inclusive model of democratic system which could be built on the principle that political power is dispersed and shared in a variety of ways- to protect minorities, *dalits*, women and other weaker section of societies and to ensure proportionate participation in governance and public domains. In inclusive democracy, incorporation of minorities, *dalits*, women and poor entail a more enlightened view of sharing economic and political resources than simple majoritarian democracy- that we are following today.

However, we should acknowledge that each society has its own particular character and history of pluralism and accordingly there will be different understanding of pluralism in different contexts. Thus, pluralism is an issue that needs to be addressed at the personal, social, cultural and political levels. In personal level it is about who we are and how we define ourselves. In social level it concerns about how we interact with each other. We need to address pluralism at cultural level because it inevitably involves our beliefs, ideas and understandings. In political level, the accommodation of pluralism involves the distribution of power and access to resources. For this reason, we need to find out the role of both the State and civil society in dealing with the issues of cultural pluralism and diversity.

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Notes

- 1 Oxford Talking Dictionary (1998)
- 2 Percentages of the total population (22736934) are taken from the 2001 census data (Population Census 2001: National Report, Central Bureau of Statistics and UNFPA 2002, Table 16 of Form 1). Due to rounding, totals may not tally to 100 percent.
- 3 The educational system encouraged nationalism and the creation of unified national society by enforcing the use of Nepali and building loyalty to king, country and Panchayat system (Pigg 1992). But emotional identification with the state was tenuous for marginalized groups of the Tarai as well as the Mountains regions (Whelpton 1997:39). The northernmost valleys, though politically within Nepal, are ethnically and culturally Tibetan. Similarly, at the other end of the country it is equally true that political and cultural boundaries are fail to coincide (Gellner 1992:11).
- 4 For detail understanding (see Bhattachan 1998; Bhattachan and Pyakyural 1996; Brown 1996; Shah 1993; and Sharma 1992, 1997; Dahal 1992, 1995; Lawoti 2000, 2001 and Bhattarai 2000, 2002)
- 5 Chamar Movement (1999-2000) of eastern Tarai is an example(see Bhattarai 2003a)
- 6 Even as of 2001 census the most deprived groups in terms of education are the Tarai *dalits*. Of them, the lowest literacy rate is that of Mushahar (7.28 %), followed by Dom (9.39%). Following them, are groups such as Patharkata/Kushwadia (Janajati) and Bing/Binda(Hindu group, water acceptable community of the Tarai). This is again followed by the Tarai untouchable groups such as Chamar, Paswan and Tatma (CBS 2001).

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Annex 1
Percentage¹ Distribution of Castes and Ethnicity of
the Population of Nepal

(1) Parbatiyas		(38.9%)
Twice-born:	Brahman	12.74%
	Chetri (formerly KHas)	15.8%
	Thakuri	1.47%
Renouncers:	Dashnami Sanyasi & Kanphata Yogi	0.88%
Untouchables ²	Kami (iron-workers)	3.94%
	Damai (tailors)	1.720%
	Sarki (cobblers)	1.40%
	Gaine(singers)	0.03%
	Badi(dancers and drum makers)	0.02%
(2) Newars³		(5.48%)
Entitled to full Initiation:	Brahman	0.1%
	Bajracharya/Shakya	0.5%
	Shrestha	1.2%
	Uray	0.3%
Other pure Castes:	Maharjan (Jyapu)	2.4%
	'Ekthariya' etc.	0.7%
Untouchable Castes:	Khadgi (Kasai), Dyahla (Pore) etc.	0.3%

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- 1 Percentages of the total population (22736934) are taken from the 2001 census data (Population Census 2001: National Report, Central Bureau of Statistics and UNFPA 2002, Table 16 of Form 1). Due to rounding, totals may not tally to 100 percent. The layout is partly based on Whelpton 1997. The largest and/or best-known groups have been capitalized.
 - 2 They are commonly known as dalits. There are significant numbers of untouchables among the Newars and within the Terai Hindu communities of Nepal, which altogether accounts about 15% of the total population of the country.
 - 3 The census treats the Newars as a single group. Figures for the main sub-divisions are calculated from the estimates of the relative size of the different sub-divisions in Whelpton, 1997.

(3) The hill/mountain ethnic groups or Janajati (21.88%)

Magar	7.14%
Tamang	5.64%
Rai	2.79%
Gurung	2.39%
Limbu	1.58%
Sherpa	0.68%
Sunuwar	0.42%
Chepeng (Praja)	0.23%
Loda	0.11%
Thami	0.10%
Bhote	0.08%
Nurang	0.08%
Yakkha	0.07%
Thakali	0.06%
Pahari	0.05%
Chhantel	0.04%
Brahmu/Baramu	0.03%
Jirel	0.02%
Dura	0.02%
Lepcha	0.02%
Byangsi	0.01%
Hayu	0.01%
Walung	0.01%
Raute	0.001%
Yehlmo	0.001%
Kusunda	0.0001%
<i>Adhibasi/Janajati</i>	0.02%

(4) Madheshis (32.11%)

(a) Castes Hindus (18.27%)

Twice-born:

Brahman	0.59%
Baniya (Vaishya)	0.56%
Rajput (Kshatriya)	0.21%

	Kayastha (Kshatriya)	0.20%
	Rajbhat ⁴ (Kshatriya)	0.11%
<i>Other pure castes:</i>	Yadav/Ahir (herdsmen)	3.94%
	Khushawaha ⁵ (vegetable-growers)	1.11%
	Kurmi (cultivators)	0.94%
	Kewat (fishermen)	0.60%
	Mallah (fishermen)	0.51%
	Lohar(iron workers)	0.36%
	Nunia	0.29%
	Kumhar/Kamhar (potters)	0.28%
	Halwai (confectioners)	0.22%
	Badhae	0.20%
	Mali	0.05%
<i>Impure, but Touchable:</i>	Teli (oil-pressers)	1.34%
	Kalawar (brewers/merchants)	0.51%
	Hajam/Thakur	0.44%
	Kanu (oil-pressers)	0.42%
	Sudhi	0.40%
	Barae	0.16%
	Kahar	0.15%
	Bhediya/Gaderi	0.08%
	Bing/Binda	0.08%
	Chidimar	0.05%
	Kusbadiya	0.001%
<i>Untouchable:</i>	Chamar (leather-workers)	1.19%
	Musahar(Basket weaver)	0.76%
	Dushadh/Paswan/Pasi	0.70%
	Tamta	0.34%
	Khatawe (labourers)	0.33%

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- 4 Also known as Rajbhar or Bhat. Though classified as a Tarai in the census, they are also found in the hills. Both in the Tarai and western hills they still function as genealogists and match-maker for the other twice-born castes, though Bhat elsewhere in the hills are more usually the offspring of irregular unions between Brahmans and or Sanyasi (Gaborieau 1978: 180 and 217-8.cited in Whelpton)
- 5 Formerly known as 'Koiris'. Their new name indicates suppose from Ram's second son, Kusha, and thus a claim to Kshatriy but this has not yet been accepted by other groups.

	Dhobi (washermen)	0.32%
	Dom	0.04%
	Halkhor	0.02%
(b) Madheshi ethnic or Janajati groups		(9.55%)
<i>Inner Tarai:</i>	Kumal	0.44%
	Majhi	0.32%
	Danuwar	0.23%
	Darai	0.07%
	Bote	0.04%
<i>Terai Proper:</i>	Tharu	6.75%
	Dhanuk	0.83%
	Rajbanshi	0.42%
	Satar/Santhali	0.19%
	Dhangar/Jhangar	0.16%
	Gangai	0.14%
	Dhimal	0.09%
	Tajpuriya	0.06%
	Meche	0.02%
	Kisan	0.01%
	Raji	0.01%
	Koche	0.01%
	Munda	0.001%
(c) Muslims/Churaute/ Dhunia		(4.3%)
(d) Marwaris/Jain ⁶		(0.2%)
(e) Panjabi/Sikhs		(0.01%)
(f) Bangali		(0.04%)
(g) Unidentified caste/ ethnic groups		(1.78%)

6 Harka Gurung (1998) has treated the Marwaris as category outside the Tarai caste hierarchy both because many are Jains and because they are seen as outsiders by the Tarai population generally. Many do, however, claim to be Hindus and there is also a placing them like, the Baniya, in the Vaishya category

काजी कालु पाँडे र कीर्तिपुरको पहिलो युद्ध

गंगा कर्माचार्य (हाडा)

समाज र राष्ट्रका निमित्त विभिन्न क्षेत्रबाट योगदान पुऱ्याउने विशिष्ट व्यक्तिहरूको खोजिनीति गरी कदर र सम्मान गर्ने लहर चलेको आजको परिप्रेक्ष्यमा, काजी कालु पाँडेले नेपालको एकीकरण अभियानमा पुऱ्याएको योगदानलाई पनि नेपालीहरूले बिसर्न सक्तैनन् । एकीकरण अभियान प्रारम्भ गर्नका लागि विशेष योग्यताले सम्पन्न कालु पाँडेलाई पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले जनमतको आधारमा काजी पदका लागि चुनेका थिए । यिनको नेतृत्वमा गोरखाली फौजले सफलता हासिल गर्दै आईरहेकोमा, वि.सं. १८१४ जेष्ठ १९ गते भएको कीर्तिपुरको प्रथम युद्धमा उनले वीरगति प्राप्त गरेपछि गोरखाली पक्षले लज्जाजनक हारको सामना गर्नु परेको थियो । उनको राजभक्ति र वीरतासँग गाँसिएको उक्त युद्ध, कीर्तिपुरेहरूको वीरगाथाले ओतप्रोत छ । दहचोकबाट उनले शुरु गरेको उक्त युद्धको दहचोककै डाँडामा गएर बिसर्जन पनि हुन गयो । दहचोकमा उनको चिहान या समाधिस्थल भएको बारे पनि विद्वान्हरूमा मतभिन्नता भएर केही प्रश्नहरू तेर्सिने गरेकाले त्यस सम्बन्धमा पनि चर्चा गर्न खोजिएको छ । आफ्नो दिव्यउपदेशमा पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले कालु पाँडेको संस्मरण धेरै पटक गरेका छन् । उनको मृत्युपछि पश्चातापको अग्निमा जलेर उनले कालु पाँडेलाई बिसर्नै नसक्ने भए ।

कालु पाँडेको परिचय

बद्धसिद्धको नामबाट पनि परिचित भएका कालु पाँडेको जन्म वि.सं. १७७० ताका भएको थियो । उनको त्वारानको नाम “बंशीधर” थियो ।^१ श्याम वर्णका भएकाले उनलाई घरमा “कालु” नामले पुकार्ने गर्दथे । गोरखाका ६ थरघरमा पर्ने काजी भीमराज पाँडेका छोरा भएकाले दरबारबाट उनले राम्रो शिक्षादीक्षा पाएका थिए ।^२ पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले मायाले उनलाई “काल्या” अथवा “कालु” नामले पुकार्ने गरेको कुरा पछिका वर्णनहरूबाट पुष्टि हुन्छ । उमेरले पृथ्वीनारायण शाहभन्दा ९ वर्षले जेठो भएतापनि उनी उनका दौतरी पनि थिए ।^३ मकवानपुरमा युवराज दिग्वन्धन सेनसँग गोरखाली पक्षको मनमुटाव चल्दा, दुलहीले लगाएको गहना र अन्माउँदा चढेको एकदन्ता हात्ति पनि गोरखालीको हुन्छ भनी माँग गर्ने दलका अधिसरा कालु पाँडे थिए ।^४ ससुरालीको तितो अनुभव लिएर सीधै घर नफर्की

पृथ्वीनारायण शाह नेपाल खाल्डोको दर्शन गर्न ६ थरघरका साथ चन्द्रागिरीको डाँडामा पुगे । ससुरालीमा दिग्वन्धन सेनलाई युद्धको हाँक दिएर आएको कुरा गुनेर बसेको बेला गोरखामा मामा उद्योत सेनसँग उनको भेट भयो । भेटका अवसरमा, दिग्वन्धन सेनसँग गरेको युद्धको हाँक र मल्ल राजाहरूसँग पनि लड्ने निश्चय गरेको कुरा उनले मामा समक्ष जाहेर गरे । साथै कस्तो काम गरे, कुन जातकालाई सेनापति बनाए काम चाँडो फत्ते होला भनि उनले प्रश्न गरेपछि जवाफमा मामाले भनेको कुरालाई आत्मसात गरी चलाएको एकीकरण अभियानमा कालु पाँडेलाई प्रमुख व्यक्तिको रूपमा सामेल गरेका थिए ।^४

लमजुङसँगको सन्धि (वि.सं. १७९७)

लमजुङलाई आफ्नो पक्षमा पारेर मात्र विजय यात्रा अघि बढाउनु उचित हुन्छ भन्ने कुरा सोची पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले गोरखा र लमजुङका बीच चिष्टी पत्रहरू आदान प्रदान गरे । फलस्वरूप लमजुङका राजा रिपुमर्दन शाह मन्त्रीहरू साथ सभामा उपस्थित हुन चेपेघाट (गोरखा र लमजुङको दोसाँधमा परेको) आइपुगे । पृथ्वीनारायण शाह पनि नरभूपाल शाहको छाप लिएर चनाखा मानिसहरूका साथ चेपेघाटमा उपस्थित भए । गोरखाली दलको नेतृत्व कालु पाँडेले गरेका थिए । लमजुङको कास्कीसँग भगडा रहेको बेला कास्की गोरखासँग मिली आफ्नो शक्ति नबढाओस् भनि लमजुङ सतर्क भयो र गोरखाले पनि नुवाकोट जित्ने अभिलाशा राखेकाले एकले अर्काको मद्दत गर्ने कुरामा धर्म भाके । लमजुङले चलाएको काजमा गोरखाले र गोरखाले चलाएको काजमा लमजुङले सरदार समेत मानिस पठाएर मद्दत गर्ने सल्लाह भयो । गोरखाले पूर्व सिन्धुसम्म जितोस् भन्ने आफ्नो चाहना रहेको कुरा पनि लमजुङले व्यक्त गर्‍यो । सन्धिको अवसरमा कालु पाँडेले देखाएको तीक्ष्ण बुद्धिवाट अत्यन्त खुसी र प्रभावित भएका पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले सो कुरा आफ्नो उपदेशमा यसरी व्यक्त गरेका छन् “जे मेरो मनमा थियो, सब उही बोलेर त्यो कालुले बाँध्यो लमजुङ साथ सन्धि बलियो तीखो निजी बुद्धिले । सो घा बन्धनवाट पाष्णिभयको (विपरित दिशाका राज्यको भय) शङ्का भयो क्यै कम, हामीलाई अगाडि बढ्न यसले केही दियो तत्क्षण ।”^५ सन्धि पछि आफ्ना छोरा वंशराज पाँडे र लमजुङे राजाका छोरा वीर मर्दन शाह बीच मितेरी लगाई कालु पाँडे गोरखा फर्के ।^६ लमजुङ र गोरखाका राजाहरू सम्मुख अरु कुरा गर्नु पर्दा प्रायः चेपे नदीको किनारमा आई भेट गरेको उल्लेख पाइन्छ । यस सम्बन्धमा द्रव्य शाह र नरहरी शाहले उक्त स्थानमा भेट गरेको घटना पनि इतिहासमा प्रसिद्ध छ । मल्ल राजाहरू पनि काठमाण्डौ र पाटनलाई छुट्याउने बाग्मती नदीको टेकु दोभानमा आई (तीनै शहरका) भेटघाट गर्ने गरेको कुराको उल्लेख ठ्यासफुमा पाइन्छ । लमजुङसँगको सन्धिमा पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले विशेष परिश्रम गर्नु परेन । कालु पाँडेले सबै चाँजोपाँजो मिलाई दिएकाले यसबाट पृथ्वीनारायण शाह उनीदेखि ज्यादै प्रभावित भए । राष्ट्रिय र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय दृष्टिले यो सन्धिपछि कालु पाँडेको प्रतिष्ठा निकै बढ्न गयो ।

कालु पाँडेको कज्याई

एकीकरण कार्य शुभारम्भ गर्नुभन्दा पहिले पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले कज्याई जिम्मा दिने काम पुरा गर्नु आवश्यक थियो । उक्त पदका लागि योग्य उम्मेदवार चयन गर्नु पर्ने भएकाले कसलाई चुनेमा पूर्व हान्ने काम फत्ते होला भन्ने कुरा उनको मनमा लागीरहेको थियो । राज्यको बन्दोवस्त गर्न राजालाई योग्य मन्त्री भएमा मात्र सजिलो हुने र उक्त पदका लागि योग्य व्यक्ति छान्दा निकै विचार पुर्‍याउनु पर्छ भन्ने कुरामा प्राचीन आचार्यहरूले विचार व्यक्त गरेका छन् । लमजुङसँगको सन्धि पछि आफू त रिभिए, त्यस्तै जनतालाई पनि रिभ्याउने गुण कालु पाँडेमा छ छैन भनी उनले बुझ्ने चेष्टा गरे । मन्त्रीमा सो गुणको आवश्यकता हुन्छ भन्ने कुरा शास्त्रले पनि बताएकाले उनले मानिसहरू दौडाई यस सम्बन्धमा बुझ्दा दुनियाँदाहरूको मत पनि कालु पाँडेकै पक्षमा रहेको र चौवीसी बाईसीहरू पनि कालु पाँडेकै पक्षमा रहेको ठहर भयो । कालु पाँडैलाई कज्याई दिएमा सन्धि सम्झौता बलियो हुनेछ भन्ने उनीहरूको सल्लाह थियो । शुरुमा पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको विराज बखेतीलाई मन्त्री (काजी) बनाउने विचार भएता पनि पछि निष्पक्ष भई बुझ्दा कालु पाँडेनै धेरै बुद्धि भएका र उनलाई नै मन्त्री बनाउनु पर्छ भन्ने धेरैको राय भएकाले उनलाई मन्त्री चुन्नु परेको थियो ।^{१५} यो कुरा उनले आफ्नी जेठी आमा समक्ष यसरी व्यक्त गरे “मैले नेपालको काम आट्या, कसलाई अख्तियारी गराया, मेरो काम फत्ते होला मगरका भरले पनि मेरो काम भएन, पन्थका भरले पनि मेरा काम भएन, म काशी जाँदाखेरको मिहनत देखा भीमराज पाँडेका छोरा कालु पाँडैलाई मुख्तियार गराया मेरो काम फत्ते होला भैँ लागिरहेछ, जो हुकुम ।” उनको यस्तो रायमा जेठी आमा चन्द्र प्रभावतीले पनि सही थपिन् । परम्परा अनुसार उनले पहिले आमाहरू, भाइ छोराहरूसित सल्लाह गरी पछि सबै थरघर भारा पंच समेत राखी कचहरी गराई कज्याई लायकको व्यक्ति को होला भनी राय दिन लगाए । सबैले “कज्याईको काम चलाउन सक्ने कालु पाँडे नै हो” भनेर आफ्नो राय व्यक्त गरे । घरमा मात्र होइन बाहिरबाट पनि समर्थन प्राप्त गर्न चाहने कालु पाँडेले यसबारे नेपाल पहाडका राजाहरूलाई समेत पत्र मार्फत जानकारी गराई राय माग्नु पर्ने सल्लाह पृथ्वीनारायण शाहलाई दिए । ती सबैले पनि कालु पाँडे कै पक्षमा मत दिए । पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले पनि कालु पाँडैलाई मन्त्री पदको निमित्त चुन्नु पर्ने कारणहरूमा उनी गणेश पाँडेको वंशमा पैदा भएका, नरभूपाल शाहको समयमा केही वर्ष काजी भएका भीमराज पाँडेका छोरा भएका, लमजुङसँगको सन्धिमा उनले कूटनैतिक योग्यता देखाई सकेका र बनारस यात्राको समयमा गोरखामा चन्द्रप्रभावती, चौतरा महोद्दामकीर्ति शाह र रणरुद्र शाहहरूका साथमा रही प्रशासनिक दक्षता देखाइसक्नु आदि नै थिए । कालु पाँडेले पनि कज्याई दर्शन गर्नु भन्दा पहिले आफ्नातर्फबाट गोरखाका थरघर भारा पंच र प्रजासँग राय मागे । सबैले उनले कज्याई चलाउनु पर्ने कुरामा सहमति प्रदान गरेपछि हुक्क भई कालु पाँडे शुभ साइतमा कज्याई दर्शन गर्न तयार भए । त्यसबेला उनले राजालाई यस्ता तरहेले विन्ति गरे— “हुकुम मान्छु कजात्रि दर्शन त म गर्छु, बुद्धि वर्गत भयासम्म भरमगदुर गादिको सोभो गर्नै छु, तदर्थ मेरा जियले मात्रै कजात्रि षाई हुदैँन जहाँ सम्म हाम्रा सन्तानले

गादिको सोभो गरिज्यालसम्म काज चलाउन सकिन ज्यालसम्म कजात्रिमान पाँडेले षानु भेति बन्देज गरीवकसन्भये अब जवाफ आवस्” पृथ्वीनारायण शाहबाट पनि “काजगरी काजको कजात्रि चलाउन सकिंज्याल् धर्म सम्भि गादिको सोभो गरिन्ज्याल तेरा संततिलाई कजाई नषोस्नु एस वातका साछि श्री गुरु (गोरखानाथ) श्री (मनकामना)” भनी बन्देज गरी दिए।⁹ उक्त कबोल वमोजिम नै पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले बंशराज पाँडेलाई योग्य भएपछि मन्त्री पदमा नियुक्त गरेको हुनु पर्दछ। सोही वमोजिम अहिले पनि पाँडे खानदानलाई “काजी” भनी सम्बोधन गर्ने चलन छँदैछ। यसबाट कालु पाँडेको दूरदर्शिता र बुद्धिमत्ता स्पष्ट हुन्छ भने राजाले गरेको कबूल पुरा गरेको पनि स्पष्ट हुन्छ। प्रजाको सर्वसम्मतिबाट मुख्य मन्त्री चुनिएको यो घटना गोरखाको इतिहासमा पहिलो थियो। जनताले छानिएको काजी हुँ भन्ने अभिमान पनि उनमा हुने नै भयो।

पाँडे बस्नेतको सम्बन्ध

चित्रादेवीको उमेर पुगेपछि उनको विवाहको चिन्ताले कालु पाँडेलाई सताएको थियो। बस्नेत खानदानमा, शिवराम सिंह बस्नेतका छोरा केहर सिंह बस्नेतको पनि विवाह योग्य उमेर भएकाले पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको संयोजकत्वमा दुवै बीच विवाह सम्पन्न भयो। यस विवाह बन्धनबाट पाँडे र बस्नेत बीच मित्रता बढन गई गएर सैनिक अभियानको तयारीमा जुट्न कालु पाँडेलाई निकै सजिलो हुन गयो।¹⁰

चौबिसी बाईसीसँग सन्धि

लमजुङलाई आफ्नो पक्षमा राखेपछि पश्चिमका अन्य चौबिसी बाईसी राज्यहरूसँग पनि नयाँ सन्धि सम्झौता गर्नु पर्ने सुभाब कालु पाँडेले राजालाई दिए। त्यसपछि भाइ भारादार सकल थरधरको कचहरी गरी राजाको इच्छा पूरा गर्न र पश्चिमका सकल राजाहरूको चित्त बुझाउन सरसौगातका साथ मानिसहरू र वकीलहरू खटिए। नेपालको जीतपछि प्राप्त धनदौलत आपसमा बाँडीचुडी खाने कुरा पनि ती वकीलहरूले गरे। तर चौबिसी बाईसी राजाहरूले गोरखालाई थाहै नदिई आपसमा सल्लाह गरी आफ्नो नेतृत्व लमजुङलाई दिई राखेकाले ती सबै राज्यका वकीलहरू पनि लमजुङ गए। गोरखाका वकीलहरू लमजुङ पुगे पछि कालु पाँडे पनि लमजुङ पुगे। लमजुङमा लेनदेनको कुरा चलेपछि धर्मबन्देजको कागज गर्नुपर्ने कुरा उठ्यो। त्यसैले कालु पाँडेकै सल्लाह वमोजिम लमजुङे राजाले आफ्ना भाइ चौतरिया हस्ते पत्रलेखी कालु पाँडेका साथ गोरखा पठाए। कालु पाँडेकै सल्लाहअनुसार पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले नेपाल जितेपछि “लाख बिस दिउला” भन्ने दोहोरो अर्थ लाग्ने करार पत्र लेखी ती चौतरिया हस्ते पठाए। अर्थात् गोरखालीले यस्को एक लाख बीस हजार अर्थ लगाए भने लमजुङेको अर्थमा बीसलाख हुन गयो। करार पत्रको अर्थ नै नलगाईकन चौतरिया पनि लमजुङ फर्के।

चौबिसी बाईसीसँग यसरी सन्धि हुन सकेकोमा यो सफलताको श्रेय पनि कालु पाँडेले पाए। पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले आशा गरे भन्दा बढी सफलता पाएकाले कालु पाँडेको पिठ्युमा

धाप दिई स्यावासी दिए । नेपाल जितेको दिनसरह नै हर्ष मनाउनु पर्छ भनी हर्ष बढाई गरी उनले देवी देवताको पूजा गरी भोजको आयोजना पनि गर्न लगाए । सन्धिपछि पनि चौबिसे बाईसीहरू धर्म बन्देजअनुसार चल्छन् चल्दैनन् भनि जाँच गर्न गोरखा प्रशासनले मानिसहरू खटाई राख्ने भयो ।^{११}

नुवाकोट माथि दोश्रो आक्रमण र विजय

निर्धारित योजनाअनुसार कान्तिपुरको मूलद्वारको रूपमा रहेको र तिब्बतसँगको व्यापारिक मार्गको रूपमा रहेको नुवाकोट जित्नु गोरखालीका लागि आवश्यक थियो । जय प्रकाशमल्लको नियन्त्रणमा रहेको उक्त गढको सुरक्षाको अभिभारा जयन्त रानालाई सुम्पिएको थियो । नरभूपाल शाहको समयमा भएको नुवाकोटको हमला असफल भएपछि सेनापति महेश्वर पन्तको चुकुलीमा परी (अर्का सेनापति) जयन्त राना खोसुवामा परेका थिए । त्यसपछि उनी जयप्रकाश मल्लको सेवामा प्रवेश गरी नुवाकोटको उमराब बनेर बसेका थिए । गोरखाबाट अन्यत्र गएका मानिसलाई गोरखामा बोलाउनु पर्छ भन्ने कालु पाँडेको सल्लाहअनुसार पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले महेश्वर पन्त र वली पन्तलाई गोरखा भित्र्याए । युद्ध पूर्व जयन्त रानालाई पनि आफुतिर तान्ने प्रयास गरेकोमा—“जयप्रकाश मल्लको नून खाईसके अब गोरखालीको पक्षमा आउन सक्दैन” भन्ने जयन्त रानाको जवाफबाट पृथ्वीनारायण शाह रिसाएका थिए ।^{१२} ज्योतिषी कुलानन्द ढकालले दिएको नुवाकोट हान्ने साइतलाई राजा र मन्त्री दुवैले गोप्य राखे । संवत् १८०१ मा १,००० सेना मध्येमा केही भाग आफ्ना साथमा राखी बाँकि भागलाई पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले दुई दलमा विभाजित गरे । त्यसमा गेर्खुको बाटो हुँदै अधि बढ्ने सैनिक दलका दलमुखी कालु पाँडे थिए । यसै दलमा १२ वर्षका चौतरा दलमर्दन शाह पनि सामेल थिए । उक्त दल महामण्डपमा उक्ली दलमुखी भएर बसेका जयन्त रानाका छोरा शंखमणि रानाको दलमर्दन शाहबाट हत्या भएपछि महामण्डप गोरखालीहरूको कब्जामा पर्न गयो । त्यहाँबाट गोरखालीहरूले ओढालो लागेर गढ फुटाउन बिस्फोटक पदार्थ प्रयोग गरी नुवाकोट माथि सफल हमला गरे । केही समयको संघर्षपछि बढाईका साथ पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले नुवाकोट दरबार प्रवेश गरे ।^{१३}

बेलकोट कब्जा

नुवाकोटको दखल बलियो भएपछि गोरखालीलाई बेलकोट सर गर्नु आवश्यक थियो । छोराको मृत्युपछि गोरखालीसँग मुकाविला गर्न जयन्त राना डटेर बसेका र थप सेनाको निमित्त उनी काठमाण्डौमा पत्राचार गर्दै थिए । नुवाकोटबाट भागेर आएका सबै जनताहरूलाई बटुलेर गोरखालीसँग बदला लिन जमेर बसेको उनको स्थितिबाट उत्तेजित भएर पृथ्वीनारायण शाह कसैलाई खबर नै नगरी सेना लिएर हमला गर्न अधिसरे । मल्ल सेनाले चाल पाएर माथिबाट वाणको वर्षा गर्न थाले । पृथ्वीनारायण शाहका सैनिकहरू हत्यताई उनका पछि लागे । कालु पाँडैले पनि घोरघाटमा आई उनलाई भेटाए । ‘हड्बडमा

लडाई छेडी हाल्नु हुँदैन" भन्ने कालु पाँडेको भनाई माथि "तैले लडाई सिकाउलास् र म लडाई गरौंला" भन्ने उत्तर दिएर पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले आफ्नो पालकी अधि बढाए । उनी ठान्न नजिक पुग्दा वैरीका तर्फबाट खसेको बाण देख्दा पालकी उठाई फर्कने विचार गरेको (पृथ्वीनारायण शाहलाई) देख्दा कालु पाँडेले अधि सरेर युद्ध जारी राख्नु पर्ने, यसो नगरे वैरीको मनोबल बढ्ने कुरा सम्झाई उनलाई युद्धमा सामेल गराए । गोरखाली फौजले जयन्त रानालाई पक्रेपछि युद्ध थामियो । घाइते सैनिकहरू तर्फ नजर फिजाएर जीतको अवसरमा पनि पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको मलीन अनुहार देखी कालु पाँडेले यसको कारण सोधे । सेना ध्वस्त भएकोमा आफ्नो भूल स्वीकार गर्दै उनले कालु पाँडेलाई "अवदेखि कटकका कुरामा विना तेरा सल्लाह गर्नु छैन" भन्दै पीठमा धाप दिँदै जयन्त रानालाई साथमा लिई नुवाकोटतर्फ प्रस्थान गरे ।^{१४} मन्त्रीहरूसँग सरसल्लाह गरी जयन्त रानाको जिउँदै छाला काढियो । यो विभत्स हत्याबाट मगर भारादारहरूको मानसिकतामा आघात पर्न गएकोले पछि उनीहरूको पुरानो पद प्रतिष्ठा कायम गर्न पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले विराज थापालाई पुनः सेनापति नियुक्त गरेका थिए ।^{१५}

बेलकोट विजयपछि नुवाकोटलाई मुख्य मुकाम बनाई गोरखालीहरू पूर्वतिर बढ्ने योजनाको कार्यान्वयन यहीँबाट गर्न थाले । यहाँबाट काम गर्न विशेष पाइक पर्ने भएकाले नुवाकोटलाई राजधानी घोषित गरी पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले एकीकरणको कार्य यहीँबाट प्रारम्भ गर्ने निर्णय गरे । मल्ल राजाहरूका दरबार पाँच तल्ले हुने भएकाले उनले नुवाकोटमा सात तल्ले दरबार निर्माण गर्न लगाई युद्धका बेलामा यत्रतत्र लागेका भलामानिसहरूलाई सम्झाई बुझाई आदरसाथ नुवाकोटमा सामेल गराए । वि.सं. १८०२ देखि १८२४ सम्मका दस्तावेजहरूमा नुवाकोट नै गोरखालीहरूको मुकाम रहेको स्पष्ट हुन्छ । सबैको सल्लाह बमोजिम उनले ८/१० जना थरघरलाई गोरखामा पठाई महारानी, भाइहरूलाई नुवाकोटमा भिकाउन पठाए । गोरखालीहरूले कान्तिपुर विजय पछि कान्तिपुर राजधानी बन्ने सौभाग्य प्राप्त गरेता पनि नुवाकोटसँग पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको लगाव हटेको थिएन । उनले आफ्नो अन्तिम घडी नुवाकोटमै बिताउने विचार गरी तादी किनारमा रहेको शान्त रङ्गमहलमा उपदेशहरू दिए ।^{१६} नुवाकोटलाई आफ्नो पुर्खाको थलो मान्ने पृथ्वीनारायण शाहका थरघरमा पाँडे वंशका वंशजहरू आज पनि आफूलाई "नुवाकोटे" अथवा आफ्नो घरलाई "नुवाकोट थर" भनाउनमा गौरव गर्नेहरू पनि छन् ।

नालदुम, महादेवपोखरी र लामीडाँडा माथि अधिकार

काठमाण्डौका लागि युद्ध छेड्नु भन्दा पहिले नालदुमगढी माथि अधिकार गर्नु आवश्यक भएकाले वि.सं. १८०२ असोजतिर नालदुम र महादेवपोखरी कब्जा गर्न कालु पाँडे खटिए । उक्त क्षेत्रहरू लिनका लागि मल्लसेना र गोरखाली सेनाका बीच युद्धहरू भए । वि.सं. १८०३ भाद्रमा बिना रक्तपात वल्लतल्ल उक्त क्षेत्र गोरखालीले हासिल गर्न सके ।

चौविशी बाइसीसँग काठमाण्डौको सम्बन्ध विच्छेद गराउन गोरखालीहरूका लागि लामीडाँडा माथि अधिकार गर्नु आवश्यक थियो । त्यसबेला भक्तपुर गोरखालीको मित्र बनी

बसेको थियो । जयप्रकाश मल्ल शरणार्थी भई बसेको समयमा काजी तौढिकको पनि गोरखाली माथि केही गर्ने आँट थिएन । लमजुङसँग गोरखाको मित्रता कायमै थियो । वि.सं. १८०४ मा पाटन र तनहुँ बीच निक्कै सम्पर्क बढेपछि लामीडाँडाको केही भाग तनहुँले कब्जा गरी सकेको थियो । अब पर्खनु गोरखालीका लागि उचित थिएन र लामीडाँडाको विषयमा कुरा मिलाउन पाटनकै एक प्रतिनिधिमण्डल तनहुँ गएको थाहा पाई कालु पाँडेले कूटनीतिको खेल खेल्न शुरु गरे । तनहुँलाई लामीडाँडा माथिको दावी नछोड्नु भन्ने सल्लाह दिई पाटनबाट तनहुँ गएको प्रतिनिधिमण्डललाई बाटैमा रोकी पाटनले गोरखासँग सम्बन्ध राख्नु उचित हुन्छ भन्ने कुरा सम्झाई कालु पाँडेले पाटनलाई आफ्नो पक्षमा पार्ने प्रयाश गरे । लामीडाँडा माथि गोरखाली सेना प्रवेश गरेपछि मित्रताको दुहाई दिदै वि.सं. १८०४ श्रावण १४ (१९ अगष्ट १७४७) मा पाटनका राजा राज्यप्रकाश मल्लले 'जसो गरे पाटन राज्य रहन्छ त्यसै गर' भनी कालु पाँडेको नाममा पत्र लेखे । वि.सं. १८०१ मा जयप्रकाश मल्लले नुवाकोट छोडीदिए जस्तै पाटनले पनि लामीडाँडा गोरखाका निमित्त छोडीदिनु पन्थो भन्ने कालु पाँडेको माँग थियो । पाटनलाई आवश्यक परेको बेलामा काठपात काटेर लैजान पाउने शर्तमा विना युद्ध गोरखालीले लामीडाँडा माथि आफ्नो अधिकार जमाए । लामीडाँडाको सिरान चौरालीमा एकठाना राखी कालु पाँडे नुवाकोटमा उपस्थित भए । तनहुँ पनि नचिडिउन् भनेर जोगीमारा उनकै अधिकारमा रहन दिए । नुवाकोट र लामीडाँडा गोरखामा मिलेपछि वि.सं. १८०४ सम्म राज्यको विस्तार दोब्बर भयो ।^{१७} त्रिशुली र महेश खोलाको दोभानदेखि दहचोकसम्म फैलिएको लामीडाँडा त्यसबेला सैनिक दृष्टिकोणबाट अत्यन्त महत्वपूर्ण मानिएको थियो ।

कालु पाँडेको पूर्वतिर बढ्ने प्रयत्न

काठमाण्डौका राजा जयप्रकाश मल्ल सत्ताच्युत भएर रहेको बेला यहाँको नराम्रो स्थितिबाट फाइदा उठाउन सकिन्छ भन्ने कुरामा पृथ्वीनारायण शाह विश्वस्त थिए । तर वि.सं. १८०७ मा उनी पुनः सत्तामा आएपछि उनले चौबिसीहरूसँग सम्पर्क राख्ने प्रयास गरेको कुरा गोरखालीहरूलाई चित्त बुझेन । वि.सं. १८११ मा उनले चिकुटी मास्केको नेतृत्वमा नालदुम र महादेव पोखरीमा हमला गर्न पठाएर उक्त प्रदेशहरू गोरखालीहरूबाट फुत्काएर लिए । यसबाट नुवाकोट देखि दूधकोशीसम्म फैलिएको गोरखा राज्य दुई फ्याक भयो । त्यसैले पनि कालु पाँडेलाई पूर्वतिर हान्न पठाउने पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले निश्चय गरे । तर गोरखाले पूर्वतिर बढ्ने अवसरमा लमजुङ भड्कने सम्भावना भएको कुरा कालु पाँडेले पृथ्वीनारायण शाहलाई सम्झाए । लमजुङको राय सल्लाह बेगर गोरखाले पूर्वतिर नबढ्ने कुरा गोरखा लमजुङको सम्झौताको एक शर्त थियो । गोरखाले पूर्वतिर हान्ने योजना बनाएको थाहा पाएर लमजुङे सरदार महिमन खवास रिसाएर आफ्नो देश फर्कन बटारसम्म पुगे । त्यसपछि हडबडाएर पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले कालु पाँडेले दिएको सल्लाह बमोजिम केही समयका लागि रुद्र शाहीलाई कज्याई दिई लमजुङको मुखमा बुभो लगाउन कालु पाँडेलाई

महिमनका साथ लमजुड पठाए । लमजुडलाई धामधुम पारी कालु पाँडे तुरुन्तै नुवाकोट फर्की आफ्नो पद सम्हाल्न पुगे ।^{१८}

चौबिसीहरूको असफल प्रयास

वि.सं.१८१२ मा कालु पाँडे नुवाकोटमा गएको समय पारेर चौबिसी राज्यहरू (तनहुँ, लमजुड, कास्की र पर्वत) ले एकगढ भएर सिद्धानचोक माथि कब्जा जमाए । यो खबर पाएर कालु पाँडे केही फौजका साथ रुद्र शाहीलाई लिएर गोरखातर्फ प्रस्थान गरे । वैशाख र जेष्ठ दुई महिना लडाईको तारतम्य मिलाएर उनीहरू वर्षायाम कुरेर बसे । भूरीको समयमा मस्याङ्दी र चेपेखोला बढेपछि वैरीले रसदको अभाव महसुस गर्न थाले । यही समय पारेर कालु पाँडैले चौबिसीको जत्थालाई समाप्त मात्र पारेनन् अपितु युद्धको राम्रो नतिजा पर्खेर बसेका जयप्रकाश मल्ल र रणजीत मल्लका सपनासमेत चकनाचूर भएर नौ वर्षसम्म गोरखालीहरूका विरुद्ध हतियार उठाउने उनीहरूले हिम्मत समेत गर्न सकेनन् । चौबिसी फौजलाई चेपे पारीसम्म लखेटे पछि गोरखालीहरूले काठमाण्डौको सेरोफेरोतर्फ आफ्नो ध्यान केन्द्रित पार्ने मौका पाए ।

गोरखाको आर्थिक संकट हटाउने कालु पाँडेको प्रयास

वि.सं. १८१२ तिर पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले आर्थिक संकट परेको महसुस गरी पाटनको खराब राजनैतिक स्थितिबाट लाभ उठाउने प्रयास गरे । पाटनको ठकुराई भित्र पर्ने कीर्तिपुर र त्यसको सेरोफेरोका गाउँमा हमला गरी धन जम्मा गर्ने कामका लागि उनले कालु पाँडैलाई खटाए । दहचोकतिरबाट कीर्तिपुरसम्म कब्जा गर्न छोटो बाटो पर्दछ । तर उनी चितलाङ्गको बाटो गरी फर्पिङमा उत्री बुंगमती र खोकना सर गर्दै पाटनतिर सोझिए । यसबाट ललितपुरदेखि दक्षिणपट्टिका गाउँहरूमा खलबली मच्चियो । त्यसवेला जयप्रकाश मल्ल पनि गोरखालीहरूसँग लड्ने तयारीमा थिएनन् । त्यसैले उनले एक पत्र लेखी त्यहाँबाट कालु पाँडैलाई हटाउने प्रयास गरे । पत्रमा उनले— “पाटन हान्न गयाका फौज नुवाकोट फिराया उप्रान्त २ मितज्यूको एकै बोलचाल हुँजी पाटन भित्र कटक गर्नु छैन भादगाउँ भित्र कटक गर” भन्ने लेखेका थिए । जयप्रकाश मल्ल गोरखालीहरूसँग लत्रिएको यो पहिलो पटक थियो । ललितपुरका प्रधानहरू भयभीत भई हर्जानाका रूपमा गोरखालीहरूलाई धन दिन तयार भए । कालु पाँडे पनि हातमा परेको धन लिई नुवाकोट हाजिर भए ।^{१९} विगत: १३ वर्षमा केवल धनका लागि मात्र गोरखालीले हमला चलाएको यो पहिलो पटक थियो । यसबाट गोरखाली अभियान आर्थिक संकटबाट गुजीरहेको थियो भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट हुन्छ ।^{२०}

कीर्तिपुर माथि आक्रमणको योजना

उपत्यकाभित्रको मेलमिलाप नीतिबाट मल्ल राजाहरूको शक्ति बढ्न लागेको देखी पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले उपत्यकातिर वढ्ने काममा ढिलाई गर्न नहुने देखे । उनी दहचोकगढी

नजिक पर्ने ललितपुरको अधीनमा रहेको कीर्तिपुर माथि छिट्टै आक्रमण गर्न चाहन्थे । कान्तिपुरका र पाटनका केही व्यापारीहरूलाई उनले गोरखामा बोलाई त्यहाँ भीमसेनको मूर्ति स्थापित गराई व्यापार गर्न लगाए । मल्ल राजाहरूको हिन्दूधर्मप्रतिको विशेष लगावका कारण बौद्धधर्मावलम्बीहरू केही असन्तुष्ट थिए । तिनै व्यापारीहरू मार्फत् उनले ती बौद्ध धर्मावलम्बीहरूलाई आशवासन दिने काम गरे । तिनै व्यापारीहरू मार्फत् प्राप्त सूचनाहरूका आधारमा गोरखामा कार्यक्रमहरू बन्दथे । रणजीत मल्लका माहिलो छोराको सहयोगबाट भक्तपुरमा भएका सबै गुप्त सूचना रामकृष्ण कुँवरलाई प्राप्त हुन्थ्यो । यसैगरी कीर्तिपुरहरूलाई हात लिने काममा सफलता प्राप्त नभएपछि उनले उपत्यका भित्र पर्ने मूलद्वारको रूपमा रहेको कीर्तिपुर माथि हमला गर्ने अठोट गरे ।^{२१}

भक्तपुरको दूधकोशी छेउछाउसम्मका इलाकामा गोरखालीहरूले कब्जा जमाई सकेपछि र सिद्धानचोकको युद्धमा चौबिशीहरूलाई पनि हराई सकेपछि अब निकट भविष्यमानै काठमाण्डौमा गोरखाली आक्रमण हुन्छ भन्ने कुरामा जयप्रकाश मल्ल निश्चित भए । काठमाण्डौ उपत्यकाका खस मगरहरू पनि गोरखालीहरूसँग मिल्ने संभावना देखी उनले काँगडाका नगरकोटी उस्तादहरू भिकाई कान्तिपुरका नवयुवकहरूलाई सैनिक तालिम दिनु पर्ने आवश्यकता देखे । मुगल शासक जहाँगीरको समयमा काँगडाको नगरकोट मुगलहरूको हातमा परे पनि ती नगरकोटीहरूले मुगल शासकहरूलाई त्यहाँबाट धपाई ठकुरी राज्यको स्थापना गरेका थिए । त्यसबेलादेखि नगरकोटीहरूको बहादुरीको बयान डोटी, अछाम हुँदै काठमाण्डौसम्म पुगेको हुनाले तिनीहरूलाई काठमाण्डौमा भिकाउन जयप्रकाश मल्लले मानिस दौडाए । वि.सं. १८१३ को शिवरात्रीको मेलाको भीडसँगै कान्तिपुरमा उत्रिने गरी डेढसय जति नगरकोटीहरू पर्सागढीको बाटो आईरहेका थिए । कालु पाँडैले फर्पिडबाट ललितपुरतिर बढ्ने प्रयास गर्दासम्म तिनीहरू काठमाण्डौ आईपुगेका थिएनन् । त्यसैले जयप्रकाश मल्लले कालु पाँडेसँग पाटनको मामलामा लत्रेर पत्र लेख्नु परेको थियो । तर ती नगरकोटीहरू काठमाण्डौमा आइपुगेपछि उनीहरूलाई उपत्यकाका तीनै शहरका मुख्य मुख्य गाउँहरूमा फिजाई नवयुवकहरूलाई सैनिक तालिम दिन लगाए । भक्तपुर र पाटनका राजाहरूसँग गुहार मागी जयप्रकाश मल्लले तीनैवटा राज्यको नेतृत्व आफै सम्हाल्न तम्से "किर्तिपुर भन्याको नेपालको मुटु हो त्यो गोर्षालि ले लियो भन्या त हामीहरू तिनै राजाको राज्य गयो यस्लाई अधि हामिहरूले दहचोकमा उकलन् दिन्या होइन उवेला हामिले चुक्यँ आज फेरि किर्तिपुर लियो भन्याता हामीहरू सबैलाई मान्यो तसर्थ हामि तिनै राजा भै किर्तिपुरका गुहार गरि थाम्न्या जोग्य छ" भनी तीनै देशका राजाहरू कीर्तिपुरको मद्दत गर्नतिर लागे ।^{२२}

कीर्तिपुरको अवस्थिति

दहचोकबाट १^१/_२ घण्टाको हिँडाईमा कीर्तिपुरको डाँडो पुगिन्छ । बल्खु खोला तरेर जङ्गल छिचोली पुगिने त्यस बेलाको कीर्तिपुर गढको रूपमा चारैतिरबाट पर्खालले घेरिएको थियो । लिच्छवि राजा शिवदेवको समयमा नै कीर्तिपुर शहरको रूपमा विकसित भईसकेको थियो ।

त्यसबेला कुनै पनि “पुर” हुनलाई सुरक्षाको दृष्टिले मजबूत वनजंगल, खाई, पर्खाल आदिले घेरिएको गढको रूपमा हुनु पर्दथ्यो । कीर्तिपुर सानो भए पनि धार्मिक र साँस्कृतिक दृष्टिले सो शहर आज पनि निककै प्रसिद्ध नै छ ।^{२३} पश्चिम र दक्षिण दिशाबाट काठमाण्डौ आउँदा कीर्तिपुरको डाँडो टड्कारै देखिन्छ । पर्यटकीय आगन्तुकका लागि यो ठाउँ अति रमणीय देखिन्थ्यो भने कुनै लडाकुको लागि सबैभन्दा चुनौतीको रूपमा रहेको थियो । यो शहर प्रवेश गर्ने १२ वटा प्रवेशद्वारहरू रहेकाले दक्षिणपट्टिको पर्खाल फोडी उक्लेर ढोका खोलेपछि मात्र यहाँ हमला गर्न संभव हुन्थ्यो । तर उक्त कार्यलाई गोरखालीले सजिलैसँग मुकाविला गरी अधि बढे ।^{२४}

कीर्तिपुर माथिको आक्रमण चलाउन पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले आफ्ना मन्त्रीहरूसँग राय सल्लाह माँगे । दहचोकका संरक्षक हरिवंश उपाध्यायले— ‘अहिले अभियान चलाउने उपयुक्त समय नभएको’ राय व्यक्त गरे । मल्ल राजाहरू संगठित भएको अवसर भएकाले उनीहरूमा फूट नआएसम्म कीर्तिपुर माथि आक्रमण गर्नु संभव हुँदैन भन्ने उनको विचार थियो । ज्योतिषी कुलानन्द ढकालले पनि यस्तै विचार गरेर लडाईंको साइत दिन इन्कार गरे । दहचोकको यो परामर्श लिने कार्यक्रममा कालु पाँडेले पनि सो समय आक्रमणको निमित्त उचित नभएको विचार यसरी व्यक्त गरे— “तिन शहर यक मुहदा भैरहेछ यसबेला किर्तिपुर हान्या फुट्नुया छैन” । तर यस माथि पृथ्वीनारायण शाह रिसाएर उल्टो कालु पाँडेको राष्ट्रभक्ति माथि शंका गरी उल्टो सुल्टो भन्न थालेपछि कुनै पनि हालतमा युद्धमा जान कालु पाँडे तयार भए । बालकृष्ण जैसीबाट कीर्तिपुर आक्रमणको साइत तयार गर्न लगाएर कालु पाँडे युद्धका लागि खटाइए । युद्धबाट आफु सकुशल फर्कन नसक्ने कुरा देखिसकेका कालु पाँडेले छोराहरूको जिम्मेवारी राजालाई सुम्पिदिएर युद्ध क्षेत्रका लागि प्रस्थान गरे ।^{२५}

युद्धको स्थिति

साइतअनुसार वि.सं. १८१४ जेष्ठ १९ गते (२८ मे १७५७) उज्यालो हुँदा नहुँदै खानपिन गरी कालु पाँडे १२०० जति सैनिकलाई साथमा लिई दहचोक गढीबाट तल भरे । उक्त सैनिक दलका पछि स्वयम् पृथ्वीनारायण शाह पनि आफ्ना अंगरक्षकका साथ तल भरे । दहचोकमा गोरखाली सैनिक दल आक्रमणका लागि तयार भइरहेको खबर सुनी तीनै शहरमा सैनिक तयारी हुन थाल्यो । कीर्तिपुर देखि उत्तर-पश्चिमपट्टिको भंसीखेल चौरमा गोरखाली सैनिक दल जम्मा हुँदासम्ममा जयप्रकाश मल्लको नेतृत्वको कान्तिपुरको सैनिक दल आइपुग्यो र दुवैतर्फबाट बाजा बजे । कान्तिपुरका सैनिकहरू गोरखाली सैनिकहरूसँग युद्धमा भिडीरहेको बेला मध्याह्नमा ललितपुरका सैनिकहरू र अपरान्हमा भक्तपुरका सैनिकहरू पनि युद्धमा सामेल भई ढाड हान्न लागे । मल्ल सेना संख्यामा गोरखालीहरू भन्दा दोब्बर भए पनि योग्य सेनापति कालु पाँडेको नेतृत्वमा गोरखाली सेनाले ढपेटा दिईरहेको थियो । कारण मल्ल सेनाले नगरकोटी उस्तादहरूबाट तीन महिना जति तालिम लिएको भए पनि कृयात्मक अभ्यास भने गर्न पाएका थिएनन् । यतिकैमा अचानक शत्रुपक्षबाट आएको काँडले कालु पाँडेको शिरमा प्रहार गरी उनलाई ढलाई दियो । ढलेका सेनापति माथि अरू

वाण प्रहार भई उनको निधन भयो । कालु पाँडेले वीरगति प्राप्त गरेपछि हतास भएको गोरखाली सेना तित्तर वित्तर भई भाग्न थाल्यो । पर बसेर युद्धको दृश्य हेरीरहेका पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले जीतको कुनै आशा नदेखी आफ्नो सेनालाई दहचोकमा फर्कने आदेश दिए ।^{२६}

अर्को एक श्रोतअनुसार युद्ध चलीरहेको अवस्थामा काजी धनवन्तका छोरा वीरनरसिंहले कालु पाँडेको गर्दनमा खुँडा प्रहार गरी शिर छिनाली दिए । शिर विनाको उनको शरीर करीब ५० फिट जति दुगुरे पछि ठक्कर लागेर अडकियो । तैपनि उनको हातमा तरबार छँदै थियो । कीर्तिपुरको उत्तर पूर्वी फाँटमा (सुन्दरीघाट देखि पश्चिम, कीर्तिपुर डाँडादेखि उत्तर भ्रुःस्थ र नारल फाँट) तिर लडिएको यस युद्धले शहरभित्र कुनै खास असर गरेन । गोरखाली दल दहचोकबाट ओर्ली तिनथानाको बाटो हुँदै डानिगालतिरबाट कीर्तिपुर ट्याङ्गलाटारको उकालो चढ्न लागे । यस आक्रमणको खबर पाई कीर्तिपुरेहरू पनि काजी धनवन्तको नेतृत्वमा आफु आफुसँग भएका सबै हातहतियार बोकी नरनारी समेतको दल बनाई सलह जस्तै ट्याङ्गलाटारतिर अघि बढे । पूर्व घोषणा विना नै युद्ध गर्न आएका गोरखालीहरूमाथि युद्धको नियम तोड्नेको आरोप पनि लाग्यो ।^{२७} तलतिर रहेका गोरखालीहरू माथि कीर्तिपुरेहरूले डाँडा माथिबाट वाणको वर्षा गरे । माथितिर राखिएका ढुंगोको थुप्रोबाट तलतिर वैरीलाई हान्न केटाकेटी, बुढाबुढी, स्वास्नी मानिसहरू सबै लागेका थिए । दुवैतिरबाट हानिएका ढुंगोहरू आपसमा जुद्धा त्यसबाट निस्केको आगोबाट वनमा डहेलो लाग्यो । यसबाट भागाभाग गरेका मानिसहरू, शिरविना छटपटाईरहेका सैनिक, घाइते वीरहरू, मृतक सैनिकका लासको थुप्रोले गर्दा रातको समय अत्यन्त भयपूर्ण मसानजस्तो देखिन्थ्यो । युद्धमा आधाजति गोरखाली सेना नास भैसक्दा पनि कीर्तिपुरको ढोका खुल्ला गर्न नसकेपछि तिनीहरू पछि हट्नु पर्यो । “सैन्यमा सदाँर भयाका अतिशूरा कालो पाँडेकन कीर्तिपुर्याले कपटले मारिदियो” । कपटले गर्दा युद्धमा कालु पाँडेको मृत्यु भएको भन्ने छाप पृथ्वीनारायण शाहलाई लागेकोले यसको बदलां उनले वि.सं. १८२२ चैत्र ३ मा वंशराज पाँडेको नेतृत्वमा कीर्तिपुर जितेपछि कीर्तिपुरेहरूको नाक काटी सम्पत्ति र वितर्ताहरण गर्न लगाएका थिए ।^{२८}

कालु पाँडेको मृत्युपछि कीर्तिपुरे फौजले लखेट्दा पृथ्वीनारायण शाहलाई पनि ज्यान बचाउन मुस्किल परेको थियो । उनलाई एक पुटवार जातिको मानिसले बचाएपछि जयकृष्ण थापाको पिठ्युँमा चढी उनी दहचोक पुग्न सफल भए । भोलिपल्ट जयप्रकाश मल्लले घाइते गोरखाली सैनिकहरूलाई लैजाने आदेश दिएकाले तिनीहरू दहचोक ल्याईपुर्‍याइए । ती घाइते जवानहरूलाई देखी पृथ्वीनारायण शाह विक्कल भई यसरी अभिव्यक्त गरे— “काल्याले त भन्याथ्यो मेरा हट्ने लडाइ बिगन्यो” । अब यहाँ बसी भलो हुँदैन भनी दहचोकको रक्षार्थ केही फौज राखी बाँकिका साथ उनी नुवाकोट पुगे । जयप्रकाश मल्लको सेना पनि आधाजति नष्ट भयो । उनले कुनै लपेटा लिएनन् । उनले कालु पाँडेको शिर मात्र काटेर लगे । ‘गोरखाका धेरै शूरवीरहरू मारी सके अब फेरी शीर उठाउने उनीहरूको के तागत होला’ भनी घमण्ड गरेर जयप्रकाश मल्लले कान्तिपुरमा फर्की बढाई गरे । उनले गल्लिले

गोरखाली सेनालाई त्यसबेला लपेटा लिएनन् । उनले चाहेको भए गोरखाली सेनालाई नुवाकोटसम्म पनि धपाउन सक्दथे । तर कतिपय कारणवश पनि उनले त्यसो नगरेको हुन सक्छ । मल्ल सेनाले गोरखाली सेनाको ढाल, तरवार, खुँडा आदि कीर्तिपुरको बाघभैरवको देवालयमा टाँसी दिए । मन्दिरको माथिल्लो तल्लामा टाँसिएका हेलमेट, ढाल, जाली टुक्रा कालु पाँडेका थिए भन्ने विश्वास त्यहाँ गरिन्छ । त्यस्तै २५,३० वटा तरवारहरू त्यहाँ रहेकोमा तिनीहरू गोरखाली सैनिकहरूका हुन् भन्ने पनि जनविश्वास रहेको छ । मानिसहरूले मर्दा अथवा अन्य अवसरहरूमा ती सम्बन्धित व्यक्तिहरूका मालसामान मन्दिरहरूमा टाँस्ने गरेको (चलन रहेको) कुरा पनि तत्कालीन देवदेवीका मन्दिरमा टाँसेर राखेका मालसामानहरूबाट पुष्टि हुन्छ ।

कालु पाँडेले युद्धमा वीरगति प्राप्त गरेपछि कीर्तिपुरहरूको लखेटाईमा पर्दा पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको गर्दनमा समेत सेनाको खुँडा प्रहार हुन लागेको थियो । सेनाले राजालाई मार्नु हुँदैन । राजालाई राजाले मात्र मार्नु हुन्छ । होइन भने यो धर्मको विपरीत हुन्छ भनेकाले उनी बचेर दहचोक पुग्न सफल भएका थिए । काजी धनवन्तलाई अधि लगाएर बढेको लस्करले कीर्तिपुरको जयजयकार गर्दै ट्याङ्गलाटारबाट कीर्तिपुर शहरतर्फ लागेको यो अवसरलाई कीर्तिपुरको इतिहासमा स्वर्णिम अवसर मानिन्छ । त्यस्तो महत्त्वपूर्ण युद्ध बारे भन्न सक्ने व्यक्तिहरू कीर्तिपुरमा विद्यमान छैनन् । जबकि कान्तिपुर, भक्तपुरको युद्धको वर्णन गर्न सक्ने वृजुक व्यक्तिहरू थिए । कीर्तिपुरका निमित्त यो दुर्भाग्य र दुःखको कुरा हो । उपत्यकाका तीनवटै राजाहरूको मेलमिलापको परिणाम स्वरूप गोरखालीहरूले युद्धमा हारको सामना गर्नु परेपनि वि.सं. १८१४ पौष २३ मा जयप्रकाश मल्लले पृथ्वीनारायण शाहसँग मेलमिलाप गरी सन्धि गर्न धर्मपत्र लेखीपठाए ।^{२९}

कालु पाँडेको थुम्का

कीर्तिपुरको युद्धमा वीरगति प्राप्त गर्ने गोरखाली सैनिकहरूका लास जताततै थन्किएर त्यसबाट धेरै थुम्काहरू बनेका थिए भन्ने विश्वास छ । त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालयमा हाल रहेको तीनकुने बसस्टपबाट टड्कारो देखिने दक्षिणतिरको भाजगलमा रहेको एक थुम्कोलाई स्थानीय बासिन्दाहरूले कालु पाँडेको थुम्को हो भनी विश्वास गर्ने गरेको पाइन्छ । वैष्णवी माध्यमिक विद्यालयको परिसरमा रहेको उक्त थुम्को माथि एउटा लाम्बो आकारको ढुंगाको मन्दिर ठडिएको छ । गोरखालीहरूको कीर्तिपुर विजय पछि गोरखाबाट कीर्तिपुरमा आई, स्थायी बसोबास गर्ने छामिछाने परिवारका साहिला खत्री र कर्ण वहादुर खत्री (जो सातपुस्ता देखि त्यहीं बसोबास गर्दै आएका छन्) हरू पनि उक्त थुम्को कालु पाँडेको हो भन्ने कुरा सुन्दै आएको बताउँछन् । कीर्तिपुरको पहिलो युद्धमा कीर्तिपुरहरूले कडा शैलीमा गोरखाली आक्रमणको प्रतिकार गर्न सकेको र उक्त युद्धमा वीरगति प्राप्त गरेका सेनापति कालु पाँडेको महत्त्वबारे पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले आफ्ना उपदेशहरूमा लेख्न लगाएकाले पनि कालु पाँडेको थुम्को सम्बन्धित जनश्रुतिले आजसम्म त्यहाँ स्थान पाएको हुनपर्दछ । तर मल्ल शैलीमा निर्मित उक्त थुम्को माथिको मन्दिर र त्यसको बायाँतर्फ भित्तामा टाँसिएको

अभिलेखमा उल्लेखित संवत् ८०७ र नेवारी लिपीसमेत प्रयोग भएकोले कालु पाँडेसँग यसले सम्बन्ध नराखेको स्पष्ट हुन्छ । कीर्तिपुरका युद्धहरूमा वीरगति प्राप्त गरेका सैनिकहरू गाँडिएको भनिएका थुम्काहरू केही दशक अगाडिसम्म त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालयको स्थापना अधिसम्म कीर्तिपुरमा थुप्रै थिए । लासको मुखमा बतिले दागवत्ति दिई उत्तर फर्काई गाड्ने चलन थियो । ती थुम्काहरू माथि निर्माण कार्य सम्पन्न गरिएकाले कुनै नष्ट भए भने कुनै कुनै आजसम्म पनि बाँकि नै छन् । कालु पाँडेको थुम्को भनिने चाहिँ बाटोको दोसाँधमा थियो । तर एक दशक अघि बाटो फराकिलो पार्दा उक्त थुम्को पनि सम्पाई सकियो । बाँकी रहेका अन्य थुम्काहरूमा उत्खनन् कार्य गर्न सके साँचो कुरा केही पुष्टि हुन सक्ला ।^{३०}

कीर्तिपुरको यो पहिलो युद्ध सिद्धानचोकको युद्ध जस्तै निर्णायक युद्ध थियो । यसमा धनजनको क्षतिका साथै योग्य कमाण्डर कालु पाँडेको समेत निधन भएकाले यसको १७ वर्ष पछि मरण शैय्यामा छँदा पनि उनलाई सम्भेर पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले यस्ता भाव व्यक्त गरेका थिए—

‘द्रव्यशाह गोरखाको राजा हुदा धेरै मेहनत गर्ने बाहुन गणेश पाँडेले रामशाहको पालामा पनि मन्त्री भएर सल्यानको लडाईँमा वीरगति प्राप्त गरेका थिए । तिनै गणेश पाँडेको छैठौँ पुस्तामा जन्मेका कालु पाँडे क्षत्री ज्यादै निडर थियो । सधैं खुशी भएर राजा र दुनियाँको हित गर्ने कालु पाँडेले साहससाथ लड्दै कीर्तिपुरको युद्धमा प्राण छाडे । भोटको मामलामा चीनले साथ दिएसम्म हामीले राजनीतिको दाउपेच खेल्नु पर्छ । त्यतातिरको कुरा कालु पाँडेका सन्तानले जानैका छन् । त्यसकारण हाम्रो उत्तरतिरको सन्धि आदि काम कालु पाँडेका सन्तानको जिम्मामा रहोस्’ । युद्धमा जानु पूर्व कालु पाँडेले आफ्ना छोराहरूलाई राजाको जिम्मामा छोडेर गएकोले उनको मृत्यु पछि बंशराज पाँडे र दामोदर पाँडे पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको “मरवट” व्यवस्थाअनुरूप दरवारकै शिक्षादिकामा हुर्के । बंशराज पाँडे योग्य भएपछि (२३ वर्षको उमेरमा) कालु पाँडेको मन्त्री पद (पाँच वर्षसम्म खाली राखिएको) सम्हाल्न लगाएर पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले देशको निमित्त उनले लगाएको गुणको बदला चुकाए । बंशराज पाँडेकै सक्रीयतामा वि.सं. १८२२ चैत्र ३ मा तेश्रोपल्ट गोरखालीहरूले कीर्तिपुरमाथि रक्तपातविहीन विजय गर्न सकेका थिए ।^{३१}

कालु पाँडेको समाधिस्थल – दहचोक

कालु पाँडेले आफु पूर्वतिर बढ्नु भन्दा पहिले लतिलपुर राज्यको चौबिसी राज्यहरूसँग सम्पर्क हुने पश्चिमेली मूलद्वारको रूपमा रहेको दहचोक माथि कब्जा गर्नु अति आवश्यक देखी वि.सं. १८११ मा आफ्ना तीनपुस्तै भाई तुलाराम पाँडेको नेतृत्वमा उक्त क्षेत्र दखल गर्न पठाएका थिए । पहिले दहचोकको सेरोफेरो माथि कब्जा जमाएर तुलाराम पाँडेले

गद्दीलाई नै गोरखालीहरूको नियन्त्रणमा पारेपछि हरिवंश उपाध्यायलाई गद्दीको संरक्षक बनाई त्यहाँ बस्ती बसाउने काम पनि शुरू गरेका थिए।³² यस विजयले कालु पाँडेलाई पूर्वतिर बढ्ने हौसला प्राप्त भएको थियो भने दहचोकसँग उनको भावनात्मक सम्बन्ध पनि रहन गएको कुरा पछि हुने वर्णनबाट स्पष्ट हुन्छ।

दहचोकमा कालु पाँडेको समाधिस्थल छ भन्ने स्थानीय जनताको विश्वास छ। २४०० मिटरको ऊँचाईमा रहेको दहचोकको सबैभन्दा अग्लो थुम्कोलाई कालु पाँडेको समाधिस्थल मानिन्छ। कालु पाँडेको अन्तिम इच्छाअनुसार गोरखा र कीर्तिपुर टड्कारै देख्न सकिने ठाउँमा उनको शिर गाडी समाधिस्थल बनाइएको थियो। स्थानीयबासीको भनाईसँग बंशावलीमा “जयप्रकाश मल्लले शीरमात्र काटी लग्यो” भन्ने उल्लेखले मेल खाँदैन। हिन्दू संस्कार अनुसार टाउको गाड्ने होइन जलाउने गरिन्छ। जयप्रकाश मल्लले काटेर लगेको कालु पाँडेको शिरको प्रदर्शन कीर्तिपुरेहरूले शहर घुमाएर गरे र विजयले मात्तिएको उक्त भीडले प्रदर्शनका लागि बाघभैरवको मन्दिरमा उनको शीर भुण्ड्याई दिए भन्ने भनाई पनि कहीं कहीं रहेको छ। राजालाई जनताले काट्नु हुँदैन भन्ने सिद्धान्तमा अड्ने कीर्तिपुरेहरूले कालु पाँडेको शरीरको भाग एकै ठाउँमा राखी दाह संस्कार गर्न दिनु पर्ने थियो। प्राचीन मान्यताका विपरीत जयप्रकाश मल्लले टाउको मात्र लगेर शरीर त्यसै छोडी दिए होलान् र ? हरूवा राजा जयप्रकाश मल्लको बदनामी गर्ने यो गोरखाली प्रयास पनि हुन सक्छ। कालु पाँडेको शरीर बारे बंशावलीमा उल्लेख नभए पनि उनको शिर अथवा शरीरलाई अन्य घाइते सैनिकहरूका साथ दहचोक ल्याइएको हुनुपर्छ। तेश्रो पल्टको प्रयासपछि, कीर्तिपुर विजयपछि बंशराज पाँडले राजाको आदेश पाई दहचोकमा उनको स्मृतिमा समाधिस्थल बनाएको पनि हुनुपर्छ। कारण दहचोकसँग कालु पाँडेको मात्र होइन पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको पनि भावनात्मक सम्बन्ध रहेको देखिन्छ। दहचोकलाई राजधानी बनाई त्यहाँ दरबार निर्माण गरी भाइभारादार थरघरका लागि पनि घर बनाई आफ्नो साथमा राख्ने उनको सपना थियो। आफ्नो दिव्यउपदेशमा उनले आफ्ना दुईवटा सपना पूरा नभएको कुराको जिकिर गरेका छन्। गोरखाका राजा रामशाह, नेपाल खाल्डोका राजा जयस्थिति मल्ल र कान्तिपुरका राजा महेन्द्र मल्लले व्यवस्था गरेजस्तै काल विचार गरी नयाँ व्यवस्था गरी प्रजाको हित गर्ने उनको अभिलाषा थियो। त्यस्तै ठूलो राज्य चलाउन, लडाईं पनि खेलिरहन धेरै मानिसहरू साथमा राख्नु पर्ने हुन्छ। ती मानिसहरूका निमित्त घर बनाउन आवादी जग्गा होइन बाँझो जग्गाको आवश्यकता थियो। सो उद्देश्यको लागि पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले दहचोकमा दरबार बनाई त्यसको चारैतिर छाँट पारेर घरहरू बनाई त्यसमा छ थरका भारादारहरू, गुरुपुरोहित, भाइ भैयादहरू राख्ने जसबाट तिनीहरूले दुनियाँको घरमा आँखा लाउन छोड्नु भन्ने इच्छा गरेका थिए। उपत्यकाका तीन राम्रा शहरहरूमा कहिले काहीँ मात्र बस्ने र अरु बेला दहचोकलाई राजधानी बनाएर त्यही बसी सबै काम संचालन गर्ने उनको इच्छा भए पनि सो पूरा हुन पाएन भनी उनले दिव्यउपदेशमा बोलेका छन्।³³ उनको सोही इच्छाको क्रममा आफ्ना प्रिय मन्त्री कालु पाँडेको समाधि त्यहीँ राखेकोमा सान्दर्भिक नै देखिन्छ। कारण मृत्यु शैल्यामा समेत सम्भना गर्ने पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले कालु पाँडेको स्मृतिमा दहचोक

(कीर्तिपुरको युद्धसँग धेरै सम्बन्धित) मा उनको समाधि स्थापना गर्नुमा कुनै असंगति देखिदैन ।

कालु पाँडेले नेपालको एकीकरणमा पुर्‍याएको योगदान माथि विचार गर्दै उनको सम्मान गर्नु पर्ने विचार जनस्तरबाट उठेको छ । “दहचोकमा कालु पाँडेको सालिक राखियोस्” शीर्षकको लेखमा— कालु पाँडेको सम्झना गराउने उनको चिहान दहचोकमा रहेको छ । तर विदेशीहरूले समेत सम्मान गर्ने कालु पाँडेको नाममा कुनै सालिक, गुठी संस्था छैन । उनको समाधिस्थल, दहचोकमा सालिक स्थापना गर्न सके पर्यटकीय क्षेत्रमा यसले महत्वपूर्ण टेवा दिन सक्थ्यो होला भन्ने उक्त लेखको सारांश रहेको छ ।^{३५} हाल आएर पाँडे वंशका सचेतकहरूबाट आफ्ना गौरवशाली पुर्खाहरूको सम्झनामा धेरै कार्य भईरहेको कुरा प्रकाशमा आएको छ । दहचोकमा कालु पाँडेको समाधिस्थलको निर्माण गर्न १० आना जग्गाको बन्दोबस्त भइसकेको र बाँकि थप जग्गाको निमित्त पनि स्थानीय साँध सीमाका जग्गाधनीहरूसँग कुरा भईरहेको छ । समाधिस्थलको नक्सा र लागतको इष्टिमेट समेत भईसकेको छ । त्यस्तै पाँडेवंशको देवाली स्थल मानिने गोरखाको खोप्लाङ्गमा गणेश पाँडे, कुमाल र भारती (कुलदेवता बोकेर आउने) का प्रतिमा राख्ने, उक्त परिसरमा पाटी-पौवा, सत्तल र कम्पाउण्डवालको समेत निर्माण गरी पानीको आवश्यक व्यवस्था गर्ने भएको छ । खोप्लाङ्गमा करिव २ रोपनी जग्गाको परिसरमा कालु पाँडेको अर्धकदको प्रतिमा स्थापना गर्ने काम श्री ५ को सरकार पुरातत्व विभागबाट हुन लागेकोमा स्थानीय जनता र पाँडे वंशबाट कालु पाँडेको पूर्णकदकै प्रतिमा राख्नु पर्ने कुराको पत्राचार सम्बन्धित विभागमा भईरहेको छ । कालुपाँडेको नामको हुलाक टिकटमा केही वर्ष पहिले टाँचा लागेको थियो भने धादिङ्ग जिल्लामा “कालुपाँडेमार्ग” को नामाकरण पनि सम्बन्धित विभागबाट गरिएको थियो । उपरोक्त सूचनाहरू “काजी कालु पाँडे, काजी तुलाराम पाँडे स्मृति प्रतिष्ठान” को २०५९-११-२४ मा बसेको प्रथम वार्षिक साधारण सभाबाट प्रकाशमा आएका हुन् । पाँडे वंशका अन्य पुरुषहरूको नाममा पनि धेरै कार्यहरु गर्दै लैजाने लक्ष्य रहेको कुरा पनि उक्त सभाबाट स्पष्ट हुन आएको छ ।

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REVIEW ARTICLE

भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण : एक समीक्षा

योगेश राज

भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण, वि.सं. २०६०, पुरुषोत्तम लोचन श्रेष्ठ, भक्तपुर, प्रकाशक वविता श्रेष्ठ, पृष्ठ सङ्ख्या २०८, मूल्य ने.रू. ५९९/-, संस्थागत मूल्य रू. ९९९/-, ISBN 99933-34-40-5

“भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण” पुस्तक लेखनको मूल प्रयोजन, लेखककै शब्दमा “नवदुर्गा गण विषयको इतिहास, धर्म र संस्कृतिलाई प्रकाशमा ल्याउनु” रहेको छ । नवदुर्गा गणसँग सम्बद्ध व्यक्तिहरूसँगको अन्तरंग वार्ता, प्रश्न, प्रतिप्रश्न र प्रत्यक्ष अवलोकनका आधारमा, अनि भक्तपुरको संस्कृतिका जानकार विद्वान्हरूसँग गरिएको छलफल, विवेचना, तथ्यपुष्टि परीक्षा आदिका आधारमा तयार पारिएको यो पुस्तक नवदुर्गा गण विषयमा एउटा प्रामाणिक तथ्य सङ्ग्रह हो । यसमा पर्न गएका तथ्यात्मक त्रुटिहरू लेखकका आफ्ना निजी कमजोरीहरू उत्ति होइनन् बरु नवदुर्गा गण र यसलाई अर्थ्याउने यससित सम्बद्ध समूह स्वयं एउटा अर्थान्तरित संरचनाभिन्न बाँच्नु परिरहेको तीतो यथार्थको विम्ब मात्र हो । यस दृष्टिले भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण विषयमा यो पुस्तक लामो समयसम्मका लागि एउटा (र एकमात्र ?) प्रामाणिक दस्तावेज रहिरहनेछ भन्ने कुरामा विश्वस्त हुन सकिन्छ ।

स्वरूप र प्रस्तुतिका हिसाबले “भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण” एउटा एक-कालिक वर्णनात्मक ‘अध्ययन’ हो । लेखकले आफ्नो संकल्पमा यसलाई “तुलनात्मक अध्ययन अवलोकन” र “अन्य गण नाचहरूसित तुलनात्मक अध्ययन” भनेर लेखे पनि पुस्तकमा हरसिद्धि गणनाच, धेचोको नवदुर्गा गणनाच, खोकनाको रुद्रायणी नाच र काठमाडौंको पचली भैरव नाँच आदिसँग भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण नाचको कुनै व्यवस्थित निष्कर्षमूलक तुलना यहाँ गरिएको छैन (हुन त कृतज्ञता ज्ञापनमा लेखकले यी सबै स्थलको प्रत्यक्ष अवलोकन गरेर जानकारी दिने जतिलाई धन्यवाद दिएका छन्) । पुस्तकमा केही तुलनात्मक टिप्पणी भने अवश्य छन् तर तिनको गौण उपस्थितिले लेखकको संकल्प सिद्ध गर्दैन । बरु उनको त्यो आकांक्षा भने अवश्य देखाउँछ, जसलाई पुस्तक आद्योपान्त पढी सक्दा पनि उनले पूरा गर्न सकेको जस्तो लाग्दैन । त्यसैगरी पुस्तकमा नवदुर्गा गणसँग सम्बन्धित तथ्यका व्याख्या अथवा विश्लेषणमूलक मन्थनहरू भेटिँदैनन् । जति भेटिन्छन ती मूलतः पादटिप्पणीका रूपमा

प्रस्तुत भएकछ्छन् । आफुलाई सान्दर्भिक लागेका व्याख्या-विश्लेषण गर्नका लागि पादटिप्पणीहरूको जथाभावी प्रयोगले कतै कतै पादटिप्पणीहरू धेरै लामा पनि भएका छन् । यस्ता स्थानमा लेखकले पादटिप्पणीको मर्यादा नाघेको देखिन्छ । यी दुवै त्रुटिले- संकल्प अनुसार प्रस्तुति नहुनु र अमर्यादित पादटिप्पणीको प्रयोगले- पुस्तकलाई कसरी सुव्यवस्थित ढङ्गले प्रस्तुत गर्ने भन्ने बारे लेखक अलमलमा परेको भान हुन्छ ।

पुस्तकमा भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गणको ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि शीर्षकको परिच्छेद छ । यस परिच्छेदले पाठकलाई उक्त किताव द्विकालिक अध्ययन हो कि भन्ने भ्रम पर्न सक्छ । यस परिच्छेदको उद्देश्य नेपाल खाल्डोमा सामान्यतया शक्ति उपासनाको उद्भव र लोकप्रियताका विषयमा र विशेषतः नवदुर्गा गणको उत्पत्ति र विकासक्रमलाई सरसर्ती केलाउनु रहेको देखिन्छ । यस परिच्छेदको उपादेयता नवदुर्गा गण नाचबारे पछिल्ला पृष्ठहरूमा प्रस्तुत विवरणका निमित्त एउटा ऐतिहासिक परिदृश्य प्रदान गर्नुमा छ । ऐतिहासिक सरसामग्रीमा शक्ति उपासनाबारे छरिएर रहेका तथ्य प्रमाणलाई यहाँ कालक्रमानुसार संकलन गरिएको भए तापनि ती तथ्य प्रमाणको एउटा सुसंगत व्याख्याको कमीले भने पाठकलाई खल्लो लागीरहन्छ । नेपालमा शाक्त मतको इतिहास बारे एउटा गतिलो पूर्वपीठिका पढ्ने अवसरबाट पाठक यहाँ वंचित हुन पुगेको छ ।

आफ्नो विवेच्य विषयमा लामो प्राचीनता आरोपित गर्नु कतिपय इतिहासकारहरूको सामान्य तर दोषयुक्त प्रवृत्ति हो । “भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण”का लेखकभित्रको इतिहासकार पनि यो दोषबाट मुक्त हुन सकेको छैन । शक्ति उपासनालाई प्राचीन सिन्धुघाटी सभ्यतासम्म पुर्‍याएर लेखकले यसलाई ‘प्राकृतिक’ र ‘विश्वव्यापी’ सिद्ध गर्न खोजेका छन् । त्यस्तै आदिम युगमा मातृसत्तात्मक सामाजिक व्यवस्था थियो भन्ने सामान्य मान्यतालाई लेखकले प्रस्थापनाकै रूपमा अधि सारेका छन् ।

मातृसत्तात्मक सामाजिक व्यवस्था नै सर्वप्राचीन हो भन्ने आग्रह औपनिवेशिक नृत्वशास्त्रीहरूले आनुपातिक रूपले अविकसित ठानिएका केही अफ्रिकी र पोलिनेशियाली जाति समूहको अपूर्ण (एकांगी) अध्ययनको प्रसंगमा स्थापित गरेको मान्यता हो । यस मान्यतामा डार्विनको एकरेखीय विकासवादको सामान्ययीकरण सिद्धान्त भित्रिएको छ । यो पश्चिमा-केन्द्रित विकासवादको एउटा संस्करण सर विलियम्स जोन्सको एशियाटिक सोसायटी हुँदै प्राच्यविद्याका विद्वानहरूमा र अर्को संस्करण एंगेल्सको परिवार-सूत्र भएर ‘प्रगतिशील’ विद्वानहरूले बृहत्तर भारतीय समाजको प्रागऐतिहासिक तथा वेदकालीन अध्ययनमा “मातृसत्तात्मक सिद्धान्त”लाई कुनै परीक्षण बिना नै प्रतिपादित गर्दा व्यक्त भएको छ । फिटानी प्रमाण नहुँदा नहुँदै पनि हाम्रा समकालीन विद्वानहरू पनि यसै सिद्धान्तका पक्षपाती भएर उभिएका भेटिन्छन् । वेद र वेदकालीन समाज (वेदको पाठले प्रतिविम्बित गरेको सामाजिक तथ्यका आधारमा) भिन्नै थियो भन्ने थाहा पाउन श्री अरविन्द, आनन्द कुमारस्वामी र गोविन्द चन्द्र पाण्डेय आदिको वैकल्पिक व्याख्या पनि हामीले हेर्नु पर्ने हुन्छ ।

आदिम मानव समाज पितृसत्तात्मक थियो भन्ने कुरा पुष्टि गर्न एउटा वैकल्पिक तर्कमूलक व्याख्या यस्तो हुन सक्छ : नारी जातिको तुलनात्मक रूपले लामो प्रजनन गतिविधि, प्रसव र प्रसवोत्तर अवधि अनि त्यतिबेलाको जैविक बाध्यताले सभ्यताको

उषाकालदेखि नै मानव समाज पितृसत्तात्मक रहिआएको हो । विशेष देशकाल र परिस्थितिमा मातृप्रधान जस्ता देखिने समुदाय र केही सामूहिक अवशेष भेटिए पनि ती अपवाद हुन्, नियम होइनन् । प्राचीन मेसोपोटामिया, इजिप्ट र चीनका सभ्यता पनि पुरुषप्रधान सामाजिक व्यवस्थाका पुरातात्विक अवशेषले निर्देशित देखिन्छन् । मातृसत्तालाई प्रकृति माथि आरोपित गर्ने पनि पुरुष नै थिए होलान्, किञ्चित् भेटिएका मातृदेवीको पूजा गर्ने विधि पनि पुरुष पूजारीहरूकै अर्थ र सामर्थ्यबाट मात्र संभव भएको होला । त्यसैले बहुपति होइन बहुपत्नी व्यवस्था सबै खाले समाजमा प्रचलित भेटिन्छन् । त्यसैले स्त्रीत्वको गुण प्रशंसाका यति विघ्न स्तुति, श्लोक, उद्धरण, कविता, पद्य आदि भेटिएका हुन् । मातृदेवीको उपासना मान्छेको सभ्यताको परवर्ती खुड्किलोमा, चेतना र संवेदनशीलताले एउटा अद्भुत ऊँचाई पाएपछि मात्र शुरु भएको हुनुपर्छ । भयमाथि आस्थाको विजय भएपछि, प्रतिस्पर्धामाथि मैत्री र सहअस्तित्वको विजय भएपछि मात्रै मातृका पूजनीय हुन गएको हुनुपर्छ । मातृकाहरूको ममत्व र सुरक्षात्मक उदारता निकै पछि (मध्यकालमा आएर मात्र) भयानक स्वरूपमा त्यसरी नै रूपान्तरित भयो होला जसरी भयानक विघ्नेश गणेश आज विघ्नविनाशक र करुणामूर्ति भएका छन् । सिन्धुघाटीको उत्खननमै पनि शिव योगी पशुपति फेला परेका छन्, उनको लिङ्ग रूप पनि फेला परेको छ ।

यति लामो विषयान्तरको निमित्त क्षमा चाहन्छु । तर यस चर्चाको आशय ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमिको खाका खिच्ने क्रममा “भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण” का लेखकबाट हुन गएको गम्भीर अन्वेषणमूलक अन्धानुसरणतर्फ तपाईंको ध्यान तान्नु हो । “मातृसत्तात्मक सिद्धान्त” का विषयमा मात्र होइन, लेखकले जुन श्रोतको आधारमा आफूले पाएको तथ्यमाथि टिप्पणी गर्ने जमर्को गरेका छन्, तिनको प्रामाणिक परीक्षा नै गरेका छैनन् । निम्नलिखित केही थप उदाहरणहरूबाट यो आपत्ति अरू स्पष्ट हुनेछ ।

- (क) मातृकाको उत्पत्ति विषयक मत्स्यपुराणबाट उद्धृत अन्धकासुर आख्यानका लागि लेखक हरिराम जोशीज्यू माथि भर परेका छन् । तर लेखकद्वारा प्रस्तुत आख्यान-संक्षेप मत्स्यपुराण (५५.१६; १६.११-१२; १७९.२-२०; २५२ :५-१९ ; १७९.; ७३७) अनुसार नितान्त फरक छ ।
- (ख) अहिल्या, द्रौपदी, तारा, कुन्ती र मन्दोदरीलाई ‘पञ्चकन्या’ अवश्य भनिन्थ्यो तर त्यसको अर्थ पञ्च मातृका (पृष्ठ १४, ५ पा.टि.) बिलकूलै होइन । ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण (३.७.२१९) अनुसार यिनलाई ‘विवाह भएर पनि कन्या’ अर्थात् ‘अविवाहिता सरह कुमारी’ रहने समूह मानिएको छ । मातृका शब्दको अर्थ र लक्षणसँग यो व्याख्या मिल्दैन ।
- (ग) काठमाडौं उपत्यकामा पाइएका मातृदेवीका मूर्तिलाई लाक्षणिक आधारमा लैनसिंह बाङ्गदेल्ज्यू तथा हरिराम जोशीज्यूहरूले गर्नुभएको तिथि निकयौल विवादरहित विषय होइन (भेराडि, १९९२; स्लसर, १९८२; पाल, १९७४ हेर्नुस्) । ईसापूर्व र ईस्वीको पाँचौं शताब्दीसम्मको इतिहास अझै धेरै धमिलो छ । लिच्छवि, वर्मा (बर्मन्), गुप्त, शाक्य आदिको प्रवेश सँगसँगै क्रमशः भागवत् (सौर, विष्णु), शिव (महेश्वर, पशुपति) र बुद्ध

धर्मको प्रचार प्रसारमा नयाँ जोश पलाएको हुन सक्ने अनुमान गर्नु सहज छ। यी भन्दा पहिले काठमाडौं खाल्डोमा रहेका किराँत, आभीर, महिषपाल आदिमा शक्ति उपासना प्रचलित थियो थिएन, अनुमानको कुरो हो। किराँतहरू पूर्वज आराधनाबाट (वज्र्यै “युमि” बाज्यै “थेवा”) शक्ति उपासना तर्फ (शक्ति “अजिमा” शिव / पुरुष “आजु”) प्रवृत्त भए भन्ने तिवारी (सन् २००२: ८) लाई आँखा चिम्लेर मान्दामात्र नेपाल खाल्डोमा शक्ति उपासनाको इतिहास ईश्वरीको शुरुवाततिर पुग्छ। यो मान्यतालाई बिना चुनौती स्वीकार गर्न हुँदैन भन्ने मलाई लाग्छ।

- (घ) “विशेष गरी सप्तमातृकाको व्यापक प्रचार एवं लोकप्रियता ईस्वीको प्रारम्भिक समयदेखि नै हुन थालिसकेको थियो ” र “प्राचीनकालका उपत्यकाका वासिन्दाहरू आ-आफ्ना टोल इलाकामा सप्तमातृकाका मूर्ति बनाई पूजा आराधना गर्दथे ” भन्ने (पृष्ठ ७, पाटि २१) लेखकको भनाइ पुष्टि गर्न गाह्रो छ। प्रमाणस्वरूप उनले अघि सारेका २५ वटा भन्दा बढी सप्तमातृकाका मूर्ति मध्ये प्रत्येक सप्तमातृकाको समूहमा किन सातवटा मूर्ति भेटिएनन् त ? यस प्रश्नको उत्तर लेखकले आफ्नो श्रोत उद्धृत गरेर टारीदिएका छन्। सप्तमातृका कहलिएका प्रत्येक मूर्ति समूहमा सातवटा मूर्ति नहुनु ‘समयको प्रभावले ती मूर्तिहरू छरिएर कता पुगे’ भन्ने बाझ्देलको तर्कको परिणाम नहुन पनि सक्छ। ती सप्तमातृका नै होइनन् कि ?

शंखमूल सिकूबहीका सातवटा निराकृत पाषाण समूह अनि त्यहीँ अवस्थित उमा महेश्वरको मूर्तिलाई त्यसै मूर्तिको पादपीठ अभिलेखमा आएको पाठ (देव्यो मातरः) लाई आधार मानी लेखकले विक्रमको सातौं शताब्दीमा नै “सप्तमातृका र यसको अनन्तर अष्टमातृका, नवदुर्गा, दश महाविद्याको शुरुमै प्रचार थालिसकेको ” पाएका छन्। पद्मगिरी वंशावलीमा भने (हसरत, १९७० : २५) जयवागीश्वरी लगायत नौवटा दुर्गा विभिन्न प्रदेशबाट आई पशुपति क्षेत्रमा विराजमान हुन आए भनिएको छ। यिनलाई नै नेपालका ‘प्रथम दुर्गा समूह’ मानिएको छ। यो तथ्य दुइ दृष्टिकोणले महत्वपूर्ण देखिन्छ। देउपाटनको त्रिशूलयात्रा (द्रष्टव्यः त्रिशूल) को सन्दर्भमा सो यात्राका कतिपय पक्ष भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा नाचसित साम्य राख्छन्। यस यात्राका प्रमुख देवीहरू पनि माथि उद्धृत जयवागेश्वरी प्रभृति नवदुर्गा नै हुन्। अर्को कुरा लिच्छविकालका भृङ्गारेश्वरीलाई गुह्येश्वरीकै सदृश मानिएको सन्दर्भमा र भाषा वंशावलीमा चाहिँ “गुह्येश्वरी विराजमान भएका ठाउँमा आफ्ना गणले सहित भई अष्ट मातृकाहरू पनि विराजमान छन्” भनेको परिप्रेक्ष्यमा नेपालको शाक्त परम्परा शैव परम्पराकै एक हाँगोको रूपमा विकास भएको हो कि भनेर अर्थ्याउने ठाउँ छ। यस्तो वैकल्पिक व्याख्या गर्ने मौकाबाट लेखक चुक्नुको प्रमुख कारण आफ्ना श्रोतसामग्रीको पर्याप्त खोजबीन र विश्लेषण नगर्ने र स्थापित मान्यतामा आधिकारिक मानिएका विद्वानका पुस्तक बिना परीक्षण सार्ने पद्धति जिम्मेवार रहेको मान्नु पर्ने हुन्छ।

पुस्तकमा रहेको ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमिको अपूर्णता जताउन लेखकले छोडेको अंशुवर्मा पछि र आनन्ददेव (वि.सं १२०४-१२२४) पूर्वको भण्डै पाँचसय वर्षमा शाक्त मतको र खास गरेर मातृका उपासनाको स्थिति के थियो त भन्ने तर्फ एक दृष्टि दिँदा पुग्दछ । पुस्तकलेखनको बेला लेखकले आफ्नो सन्दर्भ सामग्रीमा छुटाएका महत्वपूर्ण अभिलेख राष्ट्रिय अभिलेखालयमा हाल सुरक्षित एक लाखभन्दा बढी नेवारी संस्कृत हस्तलिखित सामग्री हो । यी सामग्रीले शाक्तमतको नेपाली संस्करणको (?) स्वरूप स्पष्ट पार्न सक्थ्यो । नेपाल संवत् शुरू हुनु पूर्वको महाकौलज्ञानविनिर्णय (तन्त्र तृ. ३६२), कुब्जिकामत (ने.सं १५५, १४७८ कः हरप्रसाद शास्त्री, ई.सं. १९०५, भाग १, पृष्ठ ५५), पारमेश्वरमत तन्त्र (तन्त्र तृ. ३६४, एघारौं शताब्दी ईश्वीको, हरप्रसाद शास्त्री, ई.सं. १९१५, भाग २, पृ. ४६) आदिको परिचयात्मक विवरणसम्मले पनि यस कुराका लागि भविष्यमा अध्ययनको बाटो खुल्ने थियो । त्यस्तै हरप्रसाद शास्त्रीले भेटिएको भक्तपुरस्थित एउटा ग्रन्थ किरणतन्त्र (हरप्रसाद शास्त्री, ई.सं. १९१५, भाग २, पृष्ठ ९९) को अन्तिम पटल मातृकायागपटल पनि द्रष्टव्य छ । ने.सं. ४४ को (९९ पत्र ताडपत्र, १२×१२ इन्ची आकार) यो ग्रन्थ शास्त्रीक अनुसार भक्तपुरका भट्ट पण्डिताचार्य उदयपालसोमको थियो र हाल (ईस्वी १९०५ मा) श्री पण्डित सूर्य चरण राजोपाध्यायसँग थियो । यस ग्रन्थको खोजी हाम्रा लेखकले नगरेका श्रम हुन् । लेखकले हस्तलिखित ग्रन्थ सङ्ग्रहतर्फ सर्सर्ती पनि दृष्टि नदिएर आफ्नो कमजोरी देखाएका छन् भन्ने कुराको अर्को उदाहरण जनकलाल वैद्यले उल्लेख गर्नु भएको नवदुर्गा नाटक क्रम (मा.फि.नं.ए ३४६/१२) नवदुर्गा नाँचको ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि निमित्त सान्दर्भिक हो, होइन लेखकले उल्लेख गरेका छैनन् । समीक्ष्य ग्रन्थको यो ठूलो अभाव आगामी संस्करणमा लेखकले पूर्ति गर्दै जानेछन् भन्ने आशा गरौं ।

भक्तपुर नगरको वरिपरि रहेका अष्टमातृका पीठ र तिनको प्रादुर्भाव विषयमा विद्वान् लेखकले सर्वमान्य रही आएको अवधारणालाई निःसन्देह स्वीकारेर आफ्नो विवेचना-शक्तिलाई खेर पठाएका छन् । उपलब्ध साक्ष्य एवं प्रमाणका आधारमा प्रकाशित तथ्य विन्दुहरूले समग्रमा कस्तो खाका बन्छ भन्ने कल्पना गर्नु मात्र अनुसन्धाताको काम होइन, तर त्यस्तो खाका आफ्नो कल्पनाप्रसूत चित्र मात्रै हुन पनि सक्छ भन्ने सजगता लिएर प्रमाणमा रहेका अन्तर्विरोध खुलस्त पार्नु पनि उनको कर्तव्य हो । “आनन्ददेवद्वारा नवदुर्गा पीठको प्रतिष्ठा” भन्ने सानो अंशमा रहेको स्पष्ट हुन नसकेका अंशलाई दृष्टान्तको रूपमा अधि सार्न चाहन्छु ।

- (क) भक्तपुरका नौवटै मातृकापीठ पूर्व मध्यकालीन हुन् भन्ने तात्कालिक ऐतिहासिक, अभिलेखिक र पुरातात्विक साक्ष्यको अभाव छ ।
- (ख) भक्तपुरलाई नवदुर्गामय बनाउने काम राजा आनन्द देवले गरेका हुन् भन्ने तथ्य अठारौँ- उन्नाइसौँ शताब्दीका भाषा वंशावलिहरूमा मात्र पाइएको हो । देवमाला वंशावलीका लेखकले उद्धृत गरेको अंश (पृष्ठ १९) मा “परमेश्वरीहरू यस क्षेत्रका उपाध्याय ब्राम्हणका स्वेष्ट देवता हुन्, ती ब्राम्हणहरूले सम्हालिराख्न नसकी श्री राजा

आनन्द देवका पालामा भ्रष्ट भै बाहिर आई मानिसहरु वरावर भक्षण गरी आएकोले सुनन्द आचार्यले तन्त्रोक्त विधिले" नवदुर्गाको स्थापना गरे भन्ने छ । यताबाट नवदुर्गा गण प्रतिष्ठामा सुनन्द आचार्यको महत्व दृष्टिगत हुन्छ । साथै नवदुर्गा गण उत्पत्ति विषयक आख्यानको संरचना पनि यही देखि निर्देशित हुन्छ ।

- (ग) सोही उद्धृत अंशमा नवदुर्गा गण सम्बन्धी उपरोक्त अंशवाहेक अष्टमातृका पीठको स्थापना विषयमा छुट्टाछुट्टै विवरण पर्नु ध्यानयोग्य कुरो छ ।
- (घ) मध्यकालको अस्थिर राजनैतिक-सांघातिक परिस्थितिमा आनन्द देवले तत्कालीन शक्तिको मूलस्थान देवपाटनबाट भक्तपुरमा राजधानी सारे र बाह्य शक्तिबाट प्रतिरक्षा हेतु अष्टमातृका पीठ र त्यससित सम्बद्ध उग्र तान्त्रिक स्वभावका देवदेवीको स्थापना गरे भन्ने पूर्ववर्ती विद्वान्हरूबाट उधारो लिएको मत हो, ऐतिहासिक यथार्थ कम । पूर्वमध्यकालमा देउपाटन र त्रिपुर राजदरबार समानान्तर शक्तिकेन्द्र थिए कि भन्ने शंका गर्ने ठाउँ प्रशस्त छन् । आनन्ददेवले भक्तपुरलाई राजधानी तुल्याए भन्ने कथन गोपाल राजवंशावलिमा भए तापनि यो देउपाटनबाट भक्तपुरमा राजधानी सार्नुको परिणाम थियो भन्ने कुरा काल्पनिक मात्र देखिन्छ । त्यसरी नै काठमाडौं खाल्डोमा डोयहरूको आक्रमण ने सं १७७ देखि नै शुरू भए तापनि तिनको ओइरो र बढ्ता विनाश आनन्ददेवपछिका कालमा भएको कुरो गोपालराजवंशावलिका अनेक पत्रमा उल्लेखित छन् । साथै नेवार बस्तीका चारैतिर रहने यस्ता पीठ राजधानी भक्तपुर वरिपरि मात्र होइन (र त्यसैले तात्कालिक राजनैतिक र साङ्घातिक परिस्थितिका कारण होइन) सत्तासीन शासक र तिनका पुरोहितहरूको वैश्विक सुरक्षा व्यवस्था सम्बन्धी मनोवैज्ञानिक आकांक्षा ज्यादा हुन् ।

लेखकले यस्ता कुरामा ऊहापोह गरेको देखिदैन । फलस्वरूप यो अंश विशिष्ट हुन नसकेर पूर्ववर्ती विद्वान्हरूकै अनुसरण गरेर सामान्य रहन गएको छ ।

समीक्ष्य पुस्तक भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गणको मुटु भन्नु दोश्रो अध्याय हो । अध्याय प्रवेशका क्रममा लेखकले यसमा नवदुर्गा गण नाँचसित सम्बद्ध गाथा, अचाजु, चित्रकार, कुम्हाले, राजोपाध्याय जस्ता समूहको र त्यसपछि नवदुर्गा गण सदस्यहरूको परिचय विवरण दिएका छन् । पछिल्लो परिचय विवरणमा नवदुर्गा गण सदस्यहरूले लगाउने मुकुण्डो, वस्त्र, आभूषण एवं आयुधका विशिष्टता पनि वर्णित छन् । यो छोटो अंशमाथि यहाँ बूँदागत टिप्पणी प्रस्तुत छ :

- (क) पुस्तकको पृष्ठ ३८ मा नवदुर्गा गणले भट्टप्याः नासःद्योकहाँ देवत्वसिद्धिका लागि पूजा अनुष्ठान गर्छन् भनिएको छ । नासःद्यो नृत्यनाथ मात्रै हुन्, देवत्वसिद्धिका आराध्य होइनन् । पृष्ठ ५४ मा नवदुर्गा नृत्यका लागि आवश्यक घघलासि लः ल्हाये विधान गरिँदासम्म नवदुर्गा गणको मुकुण्डो सबै बनीसकेको हुँदैन र तिनमा प्राण प्रतिष्ठा पनि

गरीसकिएको हुँदैन । त्यसैले भट्टपुत्राः नासःचः केवल नृत्यसिद्धिका आराध्य हुन् देवत्वसिद्धिका होइनन् ।

- (ख) पृष्ठ ४० मा इपाछें आगममा गरिने अन्नप्राशन विधिलाई लेखकले “मूलगुरु कै प्रथम मान्यताको दार्शनिक प्रतिक दर्शन” (!) मानेका छन् र पुष्टि गर्ने तर्क भने गुरुलितेगु विधानको अधि सारेका छन् । पृष्ठ ८९-९० मा गुरु लितेगु विधान इच्छु टोलमा गरिने र त्यहाँ मुख्यतः आचाजुले नवदुर्गा गणको मन्त्रसिद्धि (होइन, तर दीक्षासिद्धि हुन सक्छ !) फिर्ता लिई कलशभित्र प्रतिस्थापित गर्ने कुरा परेको छ । यताबाट इपाछें आगम (लेभिले पलिसाछे आगम भनेका छन्) र ईच्छु परिसरबीच के सम्बन्ध छ ? अन्नप्राशन विधि यदि गुरु राजोपाध्यायप्रति नवदुर्गा गणले देखाएको मान्यता हो भने गुरु लितेगुमा तिनको भूमिका किन अदृश्य रह्यो ? स्पष्ट हुन सकेको छैन ।
- (ग) सिफोद्यो (महालक्ष्मी) को मुखाकृति रिक्त-प्वाललाई योनि सदृश मानेर र सतीदेवीको गुह्य पतन भएको ठाउँलाई योनी कै “प्रतीकात्मक रूप (सृष्टि) वा सो सदृश गुह्यश्वरी रूपलाई गुह्य रूपले दर्शाउन” महालक्ष्मीको मुख रहनुपर्ने स्थानमा प्वाल रूपमा बनेको हो भन्ने मत (समीक्ष्य पुस्तक, पृष्ठ ४१, पा.टि. १९) लेखकको अपरिपक्व चिन्तन पद्धतिको परिणाम मात्र हो । आफ्नो अस्पष्ट धारणालाई पुष्टि गर्न ‘कलश’, ‘योनी’, ‘गुह्य’, र ‘मुखाकृति रहनुपर्ने स्थानको प्वाल’ लाई पर्यायवाची पद/पदावली मान्नु अस्वीकार गर्नु पर्ने कुरा परेको छ ।
- (घ) सिफोद्योले धारण गरेका १७ जोड १७ गरी ३४ वटा मुण्डको माला बारे चुप रहेतापनि (पृष्ठ ४१) लेखकले पूर्ववर्ती स्थानमा (पृष्ठ ३१) नवदुर्गा घोछेंको पहिलो तल्लाको वाम्रद्वारमा रहेका २४ वटा मुण्ड बारे भने कुनै पनि पूर्ण मन्त्र २४ अक्षरको हुनुपर्ने मान्यता (समीक्ष्य पुस्तक, पृष्ठ ६९, पा.टि. ८७) उल्लेख गरेर तान्त्रिक/शास्त्रीय अभिप्राय दिन खोजेका छन् ।
- (ङ) नरबलि र नरकपाल पात्र बारे लेखकको विश्लेषण इतिहास संगत देखिँदा देखिँदै पनि लेभि (१९९२: ५१५) द्वारा प्रदत्त (१) तीन वटा पात्र चाहिने, र (२) कपालपात्र निकालेको व्यक्तिको छ महिना भित्र (!) मृत्यु हुने जनविश्वास बारे लेखक चुप रहनुले पाठक अन्यौलमा पर्न सक्छन् ।
- (च) कपालपात्र नर (मानिस) कै हुनुपर्छ भन्ने कुनै मूल तन्त्रोक्त प्रमाण छैन । अपितु तान्त्रिक क्रम, कर्म, कारण इत्यादि पूजाका बेला सात थरिका पात्र पवित्र रहने र ती सात थरि मध्ये एउटा नरकपाल पात्र पनि हुने कुरा द्रष्टव्य छ ।
- (छ) गणनाचको मूल शक्ति भनेको तालवाद्य हो भन्ने सर्वमान्य सत्यको क्रियात्मक रूप नवदुर्गा गणको खिँमा उपस्थित त्रिपुर सुन्दरीले दर्शाउँछ र त्यसमा ‘दृष्टि’ नदिएसम्म घंघलासि लः ल्हायगु (अर्थात् नृत्यमा पारङ्गत भएको प्रमाणित गर्ने विधान) गर्नु हुँदैन भन्ने सहज तथ्यलाई लेखकले विचारेको देखिँदैन ।

नवदुर्गा गणको वर्षक्रिया (पृष्ठ ४८-९६) समीक्ष्य पुस्तकको प्राण हो । यसमा लेखकले गरेको मेहनत विवरणको सूक्ष्मता र आधिकारिक स्तरमा छर्लङ्गे देख्न सकिन्छ । सम्भवतः प्रस्तावनामा आफैले उल्लेख गरे अनुसार तीन वर्षसम्म (तीनपल्ट) तेहेच्याएर जाँच र शुद्धाशुद्धी गर्न भ्याएकाले यस भागको विश्वसनीयताले सिंगो पुस्तक चौरकाल सम्मका लागि सान्दर्भिक रहने स्पष्ट छ ।

यस अध्यायको सबै भन्दा सुसंगत र सफल लेखन नवदुर्गा गणको बुढेसकाल (पृष्ठ ८९) र मृत्यु (पृष्ठ ९२) सम्बन्धी वर्णनमा भेटाउन सकिन्छ । तल सानो परिच्छेद नै उद्धृत गर्नुको मूल अभिप्राय साँस्कृतिक अध्ययन लेखनको एउटा उत्कृष्ट नमुना पाठक समक्ष प्रस्तुत गर्नु हो । यो अनुच्छेद भेलु त चाइगु शीर्षक (पृष्ठ ९१-९२) मा भेटिन्छ :

“तलेजुमा ‘सीजा’ खाई मन्त्रशक्ति गुमाएर मरणासन्न अवस्थामा पुगेका नवदुर्गा गण सोही कारण धो छैं फर्कँदा अधि भैं डमरु बजाएर गएका हुँदैनन् : वाजागणले तीन मुख्य बाजा चाहिँ बजाएर गएका हुन्छन् तर बाजाबाट निस्कने धुन अधिजस्तो सामान्य र साविक नभएर ‘सिद्धिविहीन’ वा निष्प्राण भावका सुनिन थाल्छन् । त्यस्तै घःछैंभित्र प्रवेश गर्दा नकीबाट पहिलेको जस्तो स्वागत सत्कार पनि तिनले पाउँदैनन् । यसरी सरासर घःछैं भित्र पसेपछि अन्य गणहरूले महाकालीलाई जिस्क्याउन थाल्छन् । अनि त त्यसै पनि परिवारका अन्य सदस्यभन्दा बढ्ता उग्र स्वभावकी महाकालीलाई त्यसरी सबैले जिस्क्याउन थाले पछि निकै भयानक रूपमा क्रोध उत्पन्न गर्दै रिसको आवेगमा बजाउन निषेधित डमरु समेत बजाउँदै देवगृहको मूल प्रवेशद्वार खोली आफ्नो सामुन्ने गणका वा अन्य जो सुकै पर्न आएतापनि तत्कालै त्यहीँ सिध्याइहाले वा भोगबलि नै लिइहाले घातक अभिप्रायले हान्तिर बाहिर निस्कन्छिन् (....) । त्यस खतरनाक स्थितिमा सुरक्षाका लागि नकीले ढोका बन्द गर्छिन् : महाकालीले चाहिँ घघच्याएर फोर्ने दुष्प्रायस गर्छिन् । अन्तमा नहडबडाइकन नकीले रिसलाई शान्त पारी उनलाई देवगृह भित्र्याउँछिन् ।”

यथार्थ र पारलौकिकको अन्तर्सम्बन्ध देखाउने कुनै सांस्कारिक घटनाको यो भन्दा भावनात्मक र असल वर्णन पाउनु दुर्लभ भएको छ । दुःखको कुरो चाहिँ एउटा उत्कृष्ट भावनात्मक लेखनले पाठकलाई अभिभूत अवश्य पार्दछ तर उसका प्रश्न, जिज्ञासा र भ्रमलाई भने पन्छ्याउँदैन । यस भागमा पनि लेखकका अन्वेषणमूलक कमजोरीले पाठकलाई छिन् छिन्मा संदिग्ध पारीरहन्छ । भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गणनाचको वर्ष क्रियामा प्रस्तुत ग्रन्थ भन्दा अगाडी कम से कम दुइवटा कृति प्रकाशित छन् । गुश्चो र वासुकला (१९८७) एउटा लामो सेमिनार पत्र हो भने लेभिको भक्तपुरको इन्साइक्लोपीडिया भन्न सुहाउने ठेली ‘मेसोकोज्म’मा नवदुर्गा गणसित सम्बद्ध धेरै प्रसङ्ग, टिप्पणी र व्याख्या परेका छन् । जस्तो :

नवदुर्गा रक्षक देव गणको रूपमा (पृष्ठ २२७-५१) र भक्तपुरको वर्ष क्रियामा देवीचक्र नाउँको पर्व उत्सवको विवरण (पृष्ठ ५०१-७१) । गुश्चो र वासुकलाले नवदुर्गा गणको वर्ष क्रियाका सूक्ष्म विवरण खोतल्ने प्रयास गरेका छन् (हाम्रा लेखकले जस्तै) भने लेभिले चाहिँ भक्तपुरको सार्वजनिक क्षेत्रमा नवदुर्गा गणको गति, भूमिका र महत्व उजिल्याएका छन् । वास्तवमा लेभिको मेसोकोज्म भक्तपुरको साँस्कृतिक अध्ययनको एउटा प्रस्थान बिन्दु हो र परवर्ती अनुसन्धाताहरूका लागि एउटा आधार कार्य । हाम्रो समीक्ष्य पुस्तकका लेखकले गुश्चो र वासुकलाका ९ वटा सन्दर्भ उल्लेख गरेका छन् भने लेभिको योगदानलाई उनले नक्शा उद्धृत गर्न बाहेक अन्यत्र कहीं चर्चा गरेका छैनन् ।

अनुसन्धानको सामान्य धर्म आफूभन्दा पूर्ववर्ती अनुसन्धाताहरूले ईष्ट विषयको प्रकाश, प्रचार र प्रसारमा पुर्‍याएको योगदानको उचित मूल्याङ्कन र दाय स्वीकार गर्नु समेत हो । यहाँ हाम्रा लेखकले सुनियोजित किसिमले लेभिको कार्यलाई ओभेलमा पार्न खोजेका अवश्य होइनन् । तर लेभिले नवदुर्गा गणनाच विषयमा प्रस्तुत गरेका तथ्य र विश्लेषणलाई नपढीकन, पढेको भए उद्धृत नगरीकन अथवा खण्डन मण्डन नगरीकन त्यसलाई उनले किन त्यसै लत्याए त भन्ने महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न उपस्थित हुन्छ । जे होस्, पाठकका रूपमा तपाईं हामीले उनी र लेभिवीच देखिन आएको अन्तर्विरोधपूर्ण तथ्यविवरणले उत्पन्न गर्ने अन्यौल सहनुपर्ने हुन्छ । अब यहाँ केही उदाहरण दिनु परेको छ -

(क) नवदुर्गा गण नाच उत्पत्ति सम्बन्धी आख्यानमा लेभिले सम्बद्ध तान्त्रिक आचाजुलाई सुनन्द भनेका छन् (लेभि पृष्ठ ५०३) । देवमाला वंशावलिमा आएको यो नाउँलाई पृष्ठ १९ पा.टि. ५८ मा उद्धृत गर्दा गर्दै पनि नवदुर्गा गण नाचसित सम्बन्धित एक विद्वान् राजोपाध्यायद्वारा प्रस्तुत किंवदन्ती जस्ताको तस्तै दिएर लेखकले चित्त बुझाएका छन् । किंवदन्तीमा सुनन्द गायब छन् । लेभिको कथामा पलिसाछेंका राजोपाध्यायले भक्तपुरकै (प्रस्तुत पुस्तकमा नालाका भनिएका) सुनन्द आचाजुकहाँ गई तिमी देवीको आराधना राम्ररी गर्न सक्दैनौं भनि नवदुर्गा गणको कलशलाई आफुकहाँ लिएर आउँछन् । प्रस्तुत पुस्तकमा आचाजुको मृत्युपर्यन्त इपाछें आगममा लिएर आउने कुरा परेको छ । गृह्य तवरले राखेको भवानी गणलाई राजोपाध्यायकी श्रीमतीले (प्रस्तुत पुस्तकमा मठुयाहा स्वास्नीले) हेरे पछि नवदुर्गा भवानी त्यहाँबाट बाहिर निस्के । भः ध्वाकामा (समीक्ष्य पुस्तकमा इपाछें आगमको मूल प्रवेशद्वार बाहिरै) सुंगुरको बलि भक्षण गरेका नवदुर्गालाई राजोपाध्याय सोमराले तान्त्रिक शक्तिले सोंग ल्वहँमा स्थिर गराए (यो प्रसङ्ग प्रस्तुत पुस्तकमा छैन) । राजोपाध्यायको अनुनय विनय पछि गाथाहरूलाई गण बनाई पूजा गर्ने र तिनको जीउभित्र भवानीले प्रवेश गर्ने आपसी सहमति भयो । तर लेभि र प्रस्तुत लेखकको दुवै संस्करणमा (लेभिले यस किंवदन्तीका धेरै संस्करण रहेको ठम्याएका छन्) किन गाथाहरू नै देवत्वधारी हुन पुगे त भन्ने प्रश्नको समाधान छैन । यसरी लेभिद्वारा प्रस्तुत किंवदन्तीसँग आफुले प्राप्त गरेको किंवदन्तीलाई भिडाएर हेर्ने र

यस्तो तुलनात्मक अध्ययनबाट उब्जिने प्रश्नको समाधान गर्दै लैजाने मौकाबाट लेखक चुकेका छन् ।

- (ख) लेखकले आफ्नै खोजको रूपमा नवदुर्गा गणभित्र खिं वाद्यमा त्रिपुरसुन्दरी खोजेर निकाले तापनि (पृष्ठ ४५) लेभिले आफुलाई सो कुरा गाथाहरूले बताएको उल्लेख गरेका छन् (पृष्ठ ५०८) । त्यस्तै लेभिले नवदुर्गा गणको मुकुण्डोको विस्तृत वर्णन प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् (लेभि पृष्ठ ५०९) भने लेखकले उल्लेख गरेका सबै विशिष्टता लेभिका वर्णनमा परीसकेका देखिन्छन् ।
- (ग) नरबलि बारे ट्यामिल्टनले उल्लेख गरेका बलभद्र गाथाको विस्तृत पाठ (लेभि पृष्ठ ५१६) मा नै छ । उनले त्यसलाई भक्तपुरको जनविश्वासको ऐनामा समेत दाँजेका छन् । यता हाम्रा लेखकले भने नरबलिका कुरा “अहिलेका पुस्तामा समेत अपत्यारिला छैनन् भन्ने मत” व्यक्त गरेर कुनै उपलब्धी हासिल गर्न सकेका छैनन् ।
- (घ) लेभि (पृष्ठ ५०४-४९) ले महानवमीका दिन कुमारी देवीको तलेजु दर्शन पूजन एवं गणकुमारीभित्र अष्टमातृका देवी हुने कुरालाई उल्लेखनीय मानेका छन् । खास गरी यसै दिन यसपछि हुने विविध गतिविधि ख्वाःपाःव्वयगु, ख्वाःपाः खुया यंकेगु र ब्रम्हायणी पीठमा राती गरिने ख्वाःपाः लःल्हाय्म्सु विधानलाई अर्थपूर्ण घटनाक्रमको रूपमा उनले हेरेका छन् । तर हाम्रा लेखकले यो तथ्य/पाटोको पूरै वेवास्ता गरेका छन् ।
- (ङ) पाःयः न्त्याकेगु विधानमा तलेजुबाट निस्कने क्रम समीक्ष्य पुस्तक र लेभि (पृष्ठ ५५३-४) मा फरक फरक भेटिन्छ । साथै लेखकले पृष्ठ ६२ पा.टि. ५५ मा उद्धृत गरेका सिमांगर (सिम्रोन गढ) का चौगुथि नाइके र राजोपाध्याय बीच चल्ने संवाद लेभि (पृष्ठ ५५३) मा उल्लेख गरे भन्दा फरक छ ।
- (च) पाःयः न्त्याकेगु विधानक्रममा गहितीस्थित सभुंगःभैलःद्यःकहाँ हुने विधानका विषयमा लेभि (पृष्ठ ५५४) को विवरण बढि चाखलाग्दो छ । नवदुर्गा गण सदस्य पिच्छैले त्यहाँ एक एक गरी तलेजुसँग विदा माग्ने क्रममा निहुरिन आउँछन् र दुइपल्ट तलेजुलाई अँगाल्छन् । लेभिलाई उनका संवाददाताले यसरी तलेजुको शक्ति नवदुर्गामा सर्दछ भनेका छन् । समीक्ष्य पुस्तकले मन्त्रसिद्धि विधान कहाँ र कसरी हुन्छ भन्ने उल्लेख गरेको छैन । यताबाट नवदुर्गा गणको मूल शक्तिस्रोत तलेजु हुन् भन्ने लेखकले दावी गरे तापनि प्रमाण देख्नबाट उनी आफै चुकेका छन् ।
- (छ) त्यस्तै समीक्ष्य पुस्तकमा उल्लेख गरिएको (पृष्ठ ७५ पा.टि. ९८) दिं छू वानेगु, स्वाँ ब्यू वानेगु जस्ता विधानका महत्तले लेभिको सिंगो भक्तपुरको साँस्कृतिक अन्तरिक्षको गतिशीलता विषयक एउटा मुख्य प्रस्थापना माथि प्रश्न उठाउन सकिन्थ्यो । भक्तपुरमा डरलाग्दा रक्षक देवी देवता अनियत समयमा, आकस्मिक रूपले मानव वसोवास क्षेत्रभित्र अतिक्रमण गर्न आइपुग्छन् भन्ने लेभिको सैद्धान्तिक निचोडलाई हाम्रा लेखकले नपढेर अथवा नमथेका कारण) चुनौती दिन सकेका छैनन् ।

भक्तपुर नवदुर्गामय छ भन्ने लेखकको अभिव्यक्ति उनको भावनात्मक उद्वेग बढी हो तर 'नवदुर्गामय' भक्तपुरको दिक्कालको संरचनातर्फ उनले अधिसारेका दृष्टान्त भने नितान्त नौला छन् । सांस्कारिक अन्तरिक्षको अवधारणा सांस्कृतिक नृतत्वशास्त्रको परिचित सन्दर्भ हो तैपनि लेखकले यस सन्दर्भभित्र भक्तपुरमा नवदुर्गा गणको भ्रमण, नृत्य, यात्रापथ आदिमा यान्त्रिक आदर्शका अवस्थिति विन्दु, विन्दुपथ देखेका छन् । यसलाई सांस्कृतिक अध्ययनमा कुनै नेपालीद्वारा हासिल गरिएको पहिलो उपलब्धि मान्नु पर्ने हुन्छ । लेखकले यसैलाई लिएर एउटा सुसंगत र स्वयंसिद्ध कृतिको रूप दिएर सधैं र सबैका लागि प्रतिस्थापित गर्नेछन् भन्ने कुरातर्फ यो पत्तिकार उत्सुक छ । यद्यपि आफ्नो यन्त्र-मोहका कारण एक स्थलमा उनी अलि अलमलिएका भने अवश्य देखिन्छन् । पृष्ठ ७४ को त्रिकोणमय डा लाकेगु त्वः अवधारणाबाट भक्तपुर नगरभित्र माछा मार्ने विधान क्रममा एउटा समबाहु त्रिभुजको रेखापथ दृष्टिगत हुन्छ । सो त्रिभुजका तीन कोणमा आरति दिने विधान गरिने भएकाले र नगरको धरातलीय विस्तारमा यी तीन स्थलले पनि त्रिकोणात्मक रूप लिने भएकाले उनी झण्डै एउटा नौलो खोज नजिक पुगेका देखिन्छन् । त्रिपुरसुन्दरी पीठलाई सो त्रिभुजको एउटा भुजामाथिको चन्द्रविन्दु मानिदिँदा यस्तो यान्त्रिक आदर्श तन्त्रशास्त्र सम्मत पनि हुन पुग्छ । तर पृष्ठ ६८ पा.टि. ८६ मा नवदुर्गा गणको डा लाकेगु मुख्यतः २४ टोलमा गरिने भनिसकिएपछि र तीनवटा टोल तचपाः, याछें, र मुलाखु मै अरु तीन टोल जेला, भोलाछें, र भार्वाचो टोल समाहित हुन पुगेको तथ्य खुलेपछि उनको त्रिभुज सिद्धान्त सङ्कटमा पर्दछ । २४ टोल रहँदा आरति प्रदान गरिने टोल याछें समेत ९ टोल, टिवुक्छें सहित ८ टोल र चोछें र इच्छु समेत ७ टोलको तीन चरण छुट्टिन जाँदा यसले लेखकको त्रिभुज समबाहु पनि हुँदैन । यस दृष्टिले न्हयसः त्वः सम्बन्धी उनको व्युत्पत्ति पनि नेवारी पदावलीको बहुअर्थक्षेत्रको भ्रम मात्र रहन जान्छ ।

समीक्ष्य पुस्तकको तेश्रो अध्यायमा लेखकले नवदुर्गा गण नाचको भक्तपुर र अन्य प्रदेशका मानिसको सामाजिक र व्यक्तिगत जीवनमा के कस्तो प्रभाव रहेको छ भन्ने अनुसन्धान गरेका छन् । यो अनुसन्धान भएकै भनिएको घटना/दुर्घटनाको केन्द्रमा परेका व्यक्ति/परिवारसँग प्रत्यक्ष वार्ता गरी तिनको वर्णनलाई यथारूप प्रस्तुत गर्ने प्रतिवेदन स्वरूपको छ । यस्ता घटना वर्णनको उपादेयता नृतत्वशास्त्रीय अध्ययनको विषय वस्तुको रूपमा छ । घटना वर्णनको क्रममा लेखकले नवदुर्गा गण र राजदरबार हत्याकाण्डबीच तादात्म्य खोजेका छन्, जुन यथार्थका अपत्यारिला घटना/दुर्घटनालाई कार्य कारण तर्क प्रयोग गरी अर्थात्तुने बुद्धिको दर्शन बढी देखिन्छ । यस्तो बुद्धि एकजना सामान्य नेवारको रूपमा अपेक्षित नै भए पनि अनुसन्धाताले भने वार्ताको रूपमा प्रस्तुत गर्नु पर्ने कुरो हो भन्ने यो पत्तिकारलाई लाग्दछ । विभिन्न घटना वर्णन गर्ने लेखकको शैली भने सुहाउँदो छ ।

यसरी हामीले समीक्ष्य पुस्तकका गुण दोषको चर्चा गहिरिएर नै गर्छौं । संभवतः माथि गुणको अपेक्षा त्रुटिको उल्लेख बढी निर्मम ढङ्गले पर्न गएको छ । ध्यान योग्य कुरो चाहिँ के हो भने समीक्ष्य पुस्तक र पुस्तकका लेखकमा देखिएका अधिकांश कमजोरी-मूलतः

अन्वेषणात्मक विधिमूलक र विवेचनात्मक सामर्थ्यसंग सम्बन्धित कमजोरी- भण्डै सबै जस्तो नेपाली सांस्कृतिक अध्येताहरूमा भेटिने कमजोरी हुन् । यहाँ तिनीबारे विस्तारमा चर्चा गर्नु एकलो लेखक विरुद्ध लक्षित नभई नेपाली विद्वान्हरूमा सांस्कृतिक अध्ययन गर्दा प्रायः देखा पर्ने त्रुटिहरू औल्याउने अभिप्रायले प्रेरित छ । आफ्ना प्रयत्न र उपलब्धी माथि निर्दयी मूल्याङ्कन गर्ने बानी र आँट हामीमा नआएसम्म हाम्रो अनुसन्धान अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय कोटिको हुँदैन भन्ने निश्चित नै छ । यो समीक्षा त्यसै विश्वासमा अडेर आफ्ना एक प्रिय व्यक्तिको कृतिमाथि यस पत्तिकारले गर्नु परेको हो ।

अन्तमा, समीक्ष्य पुस्तकका गुण भने जति छन्, ती सबै अमूल्य उपलब्धीको रूपमा हामीले लिनुपर्ने हुन्छ । “भक्तपुरको नवदुर्गा गण” पुस्तक सङ्ग्रहणीय र एकपल्ट ध्यान दिएर पढ्ने पर्ने पुस्तक हो । यसमा पर्न गएका त्रुटि जति, कमजोरी जति लेखकका मात्र होइनन्, हामी सबै नेपाली अनुसन्धातामा अहिले सम्म रहँदै आएका त्रुटि र कमजोरी हुन् । तर लेखकले यस पुस्तकमा पार्न सकेको गुण र उपलब्धी भने उनको एकलो गुण र उपलब्धी हो । त्यसको कदर गर्ने उदारता हामीमा हुनैपर्छ ।

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BOOK REVIEW

मानन्धर, सुशिला, २०५९ “चापागाउँको सांस्कृतिक सम्पदा”, ललितपुर: लेखिका (सुशिला मानन्धर), पृ. ८४, मूल्य रु. ४५/- .

“चापागाउँको सांस्कृतिक सम्पदा” (Cultural Heritage of Chapagaon) पुस्तककी लेखिका डा. सुशिला मानन्धर (फिसर) हुनुहुन्छ । २०३९ वि.सं.मा त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालयका लागि ‘भिलेज प्रोफाइल’ को रूपमा लेखिएको यो कृति केही परिमार्जन गरी पुस्तकको रूपमा आएको हो । यो पुस्तक चार खण्डमा विभाजित छ । पहिलो खण्डमा “चापागाउँको ऐतिहासिक, भौगोलिक र सांस्कृतिक परिचय”, दोस्रो खण्डमा “स्थानीय स्मारकहरू”, तेस्रो खण्डमा “स्थानीय जात्रा र पर्वहरू” र चौथो खण्डमा “सिंहावलोकन, सन्दर्भ ग्रन्थसूची र परिशिष्ट” प्रस्तुत छन् ।

उपत्यकाको दक्षिणी भागमा पर्ने ललितपुर जिल्लामा अवस्थित चापागाउँ जंगल र खेतहरूमा भाँस्न रहेको प्राचीन नेवार बस्ती हो । ‘चम्पापुर’ नामबाट अपभ्रंस भई वर्तमान ‘चापागाउँ’ हुन गएको भन्ने स्थानीय वासीहरूको भनाई छ । यस गाउँलाई ‘वादेय’ पनि भनिन्छ । यस गाउँको इतिहास केलाउँदा भस्सार टोलस्थित ‘तस्वाःल्हो’ अर्थात ठाडो ढुंगामा कुँदिएको शिवदेवको अभिलेखबाट यो ठाउँ पूर्व मल्लकालसम्म एक व्यवस्थित बस्तीको रूपमा बसीसकेको तथा पूर्व मध्यकालदेखि उत्तर मल्लकालसम्म अर्थात शिवदेवको पालादेखि योगनरेन्द्र मल्ल आदिको पालासम्म एक प्रशासनीक इकाईको रूपमा रहेको कुरा पुस्तकमा उल्लेख गरिएको छ ।

प्रस्तुत ग्रन्थमा चापागाउँका परम्परागत स्वअस्तित्व भएका इकाईहरूबारे पनि चर्चा गरिएको छ । वर्तमान चापागाउँ गाउँ विकास समितिका ९ वटा वडाहरूमध्ये वडा नं. ५ को प्याङ्गगाउँ, वडा नं. ९ को बुलुगाउँ र वडा नं. ८ को तामाङ्ग गाउँको बेग्लै ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि र सांस्कृतिक गरिमा छ । बुलुगाउँ सन् १६१४ मा पाटनका राजा सिद्धिनरसिंह मल्लले स्थापना गराएको भन्ने उल्लेख पाइन्छ । यहाँ प्रख्यात पशुपति मन्दिर अवस्थित छ । सन् १७६६ वा ने.सं. ८८६ को अभिलेखमा यस गाउँलाई पशुपति देश वा शिवपुरी भनेको पाइन्छ ।

पुस्तकमा चापागाउँको धार्मिक स्थितिबारे पनि चर्चा छ । यहाँ पहिलेदेखि नै बौद्ध र हिन्दू दुवैधरी धर्मावलम्बीहरू रहेका थिए । यहाँ प्रशस्त हिन्दू मठ मन्दिर र गुठीहरू छन् । उति नै संख्यामा बौद्ध मन्दिर बहाल, बहि एवम् चैत्यहरू पनि छन् । संख्यागत रूपमा

बौद्धमार्गीभन्दा हिन्दूहरू बढी छन् । तर बौद्ध र हिन्दू धर्मबीच धार्मिक सहष्णुता प्रशस्त रहेको पाइन्छ । विद्वान मेरी स्लेसर (Mary Slusser) ले एकातिर यहाँका हिन्दूहरूले वज्रवाराही देवीलाई शक्तिकी देवीको रूपमा पूजा गर्दै आएका छन् भने बौद्धमार्गीहरूले चाहिँ मसानकी बौद्ध डाकिनी, मातृका वाराहीलाई पीठका रूपमा पुज्दै आएको उल्लेख गर्नु भएको छ । अर्को प्रमाणको रूपमा ने.सं. ७७९ मा स्थानीय वज्राचार्य परिवारले एकातिर शाक्यमुनि धर्मधातुलाई चाँदीको तोरण राखी पूजा गरेको थियो भने अर्कोतर्फ महाकाल महेश्वरी चक्रसम्बर वज्रवाराही स्थापना गरेको रोचक प्रसंगको चर्चा पनि पुस्तकमा छ ।

पुस्तकको एउटा विशेषता के छ भने यसमा चापागाऊँको मानवशास्त्रीय पक्षको पनि चर्चा छ । चापागाऊँमा सबभन्दा बढी जनसंख्या नेवारहरूको र त्यसपछि तामाङहरू रहेको पाइन्छ । यहाँका तामाङहरू हिन्दू धर्मावलम्बी भए पनि अन्य क्षेत्रका तामाङहरूले जस्तै मन्साउने, रक्षापूजा गर्ने, प्रकृति पूजा गर्ने जस्ता चलन पनि राख्दछन् । यिनीहरू लामाद्वारा पूजाआजा गराउँदछन् । यहाँ नेवार समुदायको बढी जनसंख्या भएको तथा स्थान र टोल अनुसार आफ्नो आफ्नो मौलिक पहिचान राखेको कुरा पुस्तकमा उल्लेख गरिएको छ । प्याङगाऊँका ज्यापुहरूले आफ्ना सांस्कृतिक क्रियाकलाप, धार्मिक परम्परा, भाषा एवम् वैवाहिक सम्बन्धका क्रममा आफ्ना मौलिक पहिचान कायम राखेको पाइन्छ । शिवलाई इष्टदेव मान्ने यी गाउँलेहरू मृत्यु संस्कारको बेला हिन्दू पुरोहित तथा अन्य समयमा बौद्ध पुरोहितद्वारा संस्कार सम्पन्न गराउँछन्, जुन यहाँको खास विशेषता हो । प्याङगाऊँको नेवारहरूको भाषा पनि अन्य क्षेत्रका नेवारहरूको भन्दा अलि पृथक रहेको विचार पनि ग्रन्थकारको छ । तर यसबारे भाषाविद्हरूको धारणा मात्र प्रामाणिक हुन सक्ला ।

पुस्तकमा चापागाऊँको सांस्कृतिक परिचय दिने क्रममा लेखिकाले वडा नं. १ देखि ४ सम्म नेवार समुदायको बाहुल्य रहेको र त्यसमा पनि बढी मात्रामा देशार वा महर्जनहरू रहेको चर्चा गर्नु भएको छ । यी बाहेक त्यहाँ श्रेष्ठ, बज्राचार्य, शाक्य, पोडे, च्यामे, कसाई र केही ब्राह्मण, क्षेत्री, दमाई र कामीहरू रहेको पाइन्छ । यहाँको सांस्कृतिक परम्परा अन्तर्गत वज्रवाराहीको जात्राबारे पुस्तकमा विस्तृत वर्णन गरिएको छ ।

सन् १९९१ का जनगणनाअनुसार चापागाऊँमा ५०३२ पुरुष र ४८९३ महिला गरी जम्मा ९९२५ जनसंख्या रहेको थियो ।

यस पुस्तकको अर्को विशेषता हो चापागाऊँको सांस्कृतिक परिचय सामुदायिक परिचय । सामुदायिक विकास र आपसी सहयोगका लागि स्थानीय जनसमुदायले विभिन्न सामाजिक तथा धार्मिक संगठनहरू स्थापना गरेका छन् । विभिन्न सांस्कृतिक पर्वहरू तथा विभिन्न सामाजिक क्रियाकलापहरू यिनै सामाजिक तथा धार्मिक संगठनहरूको सक्रियतामा संचालित हुने गरेको कुरा पुस्तकमा पाइन्छ । विभिन्न धार्मिक तथा सामाजिक क्रियाकलापहरू संचालन गर्न खेत-गुठीहरूको व्यवस्था गरिएको छ । बुलुगाऊँको 'मरछी गुठी'ले स्थानीय उत्सव संचालन गर्नुका साथै आपसी सहयोगबाट सामुदायिक विकासको कार्यसमेत गर्ने गरेको पाइन्छ । यस गुठीअन्तर्गत कुनै पनि परोपकारी कार्यमा सबै गुठियारहरू सहभागी हुनुपर्ने नियम छ । चापागाऊँको ऐतिहासिक, भौगोलिक र सांस्कृतिक

परिचयको क्रममा चापागाउँको इतिहास, परम्परागत स्वअस्तित्व भएका इकाईहरू, समाज, भाषा, आर्थिक कृयाकलापहरू, प्रशासन, धार्मिक परम्परा आदिवारे पनि यस पुस्तकमा चर्चा छ ।

पुस्तकको दोस्रो खण्डमा चापागाउँका स्थानीय सम्पदाहरूको चर्चा छ । चापागाउँमा थुप्रै मन्दिर, मूर्ति, पाटी पौवाहरू र सार्वजनिक महत्वका पोखरीहरू रहेको कुरा लेखिकाले प्रस्तुत पुस्तकमा उल्लेख गरेकी छन् । यीमध्ये बज्रवाराही मन्दिर जीर्ण अवस्थामा रहेका कृष्ण मन्दिर, वंश गोपाल मन्दिर, भीमसेन मूर्ति, ब्रह्मा मूर्ति, शिव मन्दिर, भैरव मन्दिर, गणेश मन्दिर, चन्द्रेश्वर भैरव मन्दिर, चैत्यहरू आदि रहेका छन् । चापागाउँका बज्रवाराही मूर्ति तथा मन्दिर महत्वपूर्ण छन् तर बज्रवाराहीको सो मुख्य मूर्ति राष्ट्रिय संग्रहालय छाउनीको प्रदर्शन कक्षमा राखिएको छ । त्यसको स्थानमा हाल नयाँ मूर्तिको प्रयोग जात्राको लागि गरिएको छ । पुस्तकमा बज्रवाराही देवीको उत्पत्ति सम्बन्धमा पनि चर्चा गरिएको छ ।

एक किम्बदन्तिअनुसार परापूर्वकालमा त्यस स्थानमा एउटा फोहर कुण्ड थियो । त्यहाँ वाराहीरूपी देवी खेलिरहेको अवस्थामा उनको हत्या भएको थियो । पछि तिनै वाराही देवी सिद्ध भई बज्रवाराही माईको उत्पत्ति भएको हो । (मानन्धर २०४४:२२९)

नेपाली पैगोडा शैलीमा निर्मित वज्रवाराही मन्दिरमा गजूर रहेको छैन । मन्दिरमा गजूर नहुनुमा केही लोक धारणाहरू छन् । एकधरीको भनाई अनुसार देवी स्वयम्को इच्छाले यो मन्दिर अधूरो छाडिएको हो । अर्काधरीको भनाईमा यो मन्दिर नौवटा मसानहरूले घेरिएको हुँदा मुर्दा पोल्न नल्याएसम्म यहाँ गजूर राख्न हुँदैन । त्यस्तै अर्को विश्वास अनुसार यो मन्दिर प्रेत आत्माले रातभरिमा तयार गरीदिने शर्तमा निर्माण गरेका थिए तर सो काम पूरा नहुँदै उज्यालो भएको हुँदा गजूर नराखीकनै उनीहरू अन्तर्धान भएको कुराको पुस्तकमा उल्लेख छ । अधूरो छोडिएको यो मन्दिर समय समयमा जीर्णोद्धार हुने गरेका प्रमाण विभिन्न समयमा त्यहाँ राखिएका अभिलेखहरूबाट थाहा हुन्छ । तर गजूर राख्ने प्रयास कसैबाट गरिएको पाइएन । लेखिकाले यसको कारण प्रस्तुत गर्नु भएको छैन ।

बीस वर्षको अन्तरालमा वज्रवाराही मन्दिर परिसरभित्र व्यापक परिवर्तनहरू पाइएको कुराको चर्चा लेखिकाले गर्नु भएको छ । यहाँ भक्तजनहरूको सुविधाका लागि सडक र प्रवेशद्वारहरूको निर्माण भइरहेको छ । स्थानीय जनताको सहभागितामा पर्यटकहरूको आकर्षण केन्द्र बनाउन विभिन्न टहराहरूको निर्माण भएको छ ।

चापागाउँमा ऐतिहासिक मूर्ति, मन्दिर तथा सार्वजनिक महत्वका स्थलहरू भएको कुराको पुस्तकमा उल्लेख छ । काष्ठकलाका दृष्टिले आकर्षक दुई तल्ले पैगोडा शैलीमा निर्मित वंशगोपाल मन्दिर, कृष्ण मन्दिर, इखाटोल बजार परिसरमा स्थापित भीमसेनको प्रस्तर मूर्ति, दुई नृत्याङ्गनासहितको कृष्णको मूर्ति, शिवमन्दिर, योकुटोलमा स्थापित ब्रह्माको मूर्ति, गणेश मन्दिरहरू, यटखाको भैरव मन्दिर, बुलुगाउँस्थित स्मारक चन्द्रेश्वर भैरव, प्याङ गाउँको निकुचा महादेव मूर्ति, विभिन्न बौद्ध स्मारकहरू, चैत्य, बहि, बहालहरू, ईखा पुखु (भैरव पोखरी), खसिमार पोखरी आदि महत्वपूर्ण सांस्कृतिक सम्पदाहरू छन् । खसिमार पोखरी तामाङहरूको वार्षिक मेलाका लागि विशेष महत्व राख्दछ । यसरी

लेखिकाले पुस्तकको दोस्रो खण्डमा चापागाऊँका हिन्दू तथा बौद्ध स्थलहरूको राम्रो परिचय दिएको छन् ।

पुस्तकको तेस्रो खण्डमा चापागाऊँमा मनाइने स्थानीय पर्व र जात्राहरूबारे चर्चा छ । राष्ट्रिय चाडपर्वबाहेक चापागाऊँका आफ्नै मौलिक जात्रापर्वहरू छन् । तीमध्ये वज्रवाराही जात्रा प्रमुख हो । वर्षको दुईपल्ट कार्तिक र चैत्र पूर्णिमामा मनाइने यो जात्रा चम्पापुर वा वादेय् अर्थात् हालको वडा नं. १,२,३ र ४ मा मनाइन्छ । जात्रामा सुनको जलप लगाइएको धातु मूर्ति तीन गजुरयुक्त खटमा राखी बाजागाजा र शोभायात्रासहित चम्पापुर नगरपरिक्रमा गराइन्छ । चैत्र महिनामा देवीको सिन्दूर छरिने जात्रा हुन्छ र यसलाई सिन्दूर जात्रा (सिन्ह जात्रा) पनि भनिन्छ । यो जात्रा देवीको जन्म दिनको रूपमा मनाई आएको देखिन्छ । यो जात्रा खः गुठी र चक्रगुठीले द्वारेको पूजा र आदेशबाट संचालन गरिन्छ । वज्रवाराही जात्राबारेका विविध किम्बदन्तीहरूको पनि पुस्तकमा चर्चा गरिएकोले पुस्तक रोचक बनेको छ । यसैगरी काठमाडौँमा भाद्रपूर्णिमामा मनाइने इन्द्रजात्रा जस्तै प्याङगाऊँमा पनि त्यस समयमा सप्ताहव्यापी विशेष जात्रा हुन्छ । यसै अवसरमा गाऊँलेका इष्ट देवता कालेश्वर वा निकुंचा महाद्यः जात्रा गरिन्छ । कालेश्वर मन्दिर गाऊँबाट करिब १२ घण्टाको हिँडाईमा दक्षिणतर्फ पर्ने दुई उच्च पहाडहरूको खोंचमा अवस्थित छ । पुस्तकमा कालेश्वर महादेवको पूजा अर्चनाबारे कला वास्तुकलाबारे पनि उल्लेख गरिएको छ । जात्रामा बाहेक कालेश्वर देवताको कुनै पनि व्यक्तिले अन्य समयमा दर्शन गर्न नहुने कुराको पनि पुस्तकमा चर्चा गरिएको छ ।

जात्रा वर्णनकै क्रममा चैत्र पूर्णिमाको भोलीपल्ट वडा नं. ९ को भूयालपाटी गाऊँमा मनाइने गणेश र सरस्वतीको समयद्यः (दिपंकर) को यात्रापूजा, पंचदान, सम्येक यात्रा, समयद्यः ब्वय्गु, खसिमार र पोखरीको मेला, चन्द्रेश्वर भैरव जात्रा, मिसापायो (महिला खड्ग यात्री) आदिवारे पनि चर्चा गरिएको छ, जुन चापागाऊँमा मनाइने आफ्नै मौलिक जात्राहरू हुन् । यसमध्ये मिसा पायो (महिला खड्ग यात्रा) जात्रा विशेष रोचक रहेको पाइन्छ । तर हाल यस पर्वको प्रचलन हराएको छ । करिब ६०-७० वर्ष पूर्वसम्म बुलुगाऊँमा मिसापायो जात्राको प्रचलन थियो । यो खड्ग यात्रा हेर्ने विभिन्न ठाउँका मानिसहरूको भीड लाग्थ्यो भन्ने भनाई स्थानीय पायो गुठीका गुठियारहरूको छ । यसबाट उक्त समुदायमा महिला वर्गलाई शक्तिकी प्रतीक नवदुर्गाको रूपमा मान्दै आएको र महिलाहरूको सांस्कृतिक भूमिका रहेको कुराको पनि उल्लेख पाइन्छ ।

पुस्तकको चौथो खण्डमा पुस्तकको सिंहावलोकन, परिशिष्ट र अभिलेखहरू, सन्दर्भ ग्रन्थ राखिएका छन् ।

सिंहावलोकनअन्तर्गत लेखिकाले प्राचीनकालमा व्यापारिक केन्द्र रहेको, पूर्व मल्लकालीन समयदेखि व्यवस्थित बस्ती बसेको चापागाऊँको ऐतिहासिक, धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक र सामाजिक महत्त्व तथा जीर्ण अवस्थामा रहेका सांस्कृतिक सम्पदाहरूको पुनरुत्थान तथा सर्वेक्षण गर्न स्थानीय निकायको ध्यान आकृष्ट गरेकी छन् ।

यस पुस्तकको एउटा मुख्य विशेषता के पनि छ भने यसमा चापागाउँलाई प्राचीन ऐतिहासिक-सांस्कृतिक सम्पदास्थलको रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । काठमाडौंको प्राचीन पुरातात्विक-सांस्कृतिक महत्वलाई दृष्टिगत गर्दै विश्वसम्पदा संघले उपत्यकाका विविधस्थललाई 'विश्वसम्पदा स्थल' घोषित गरी उचित संरक्षण तथा अनुगमनको व्यवस्था गरेको छ । यो नेपालका लागि गौरवको कुरा हो । चापागाउँ पनि प्राचीन सम्पदायुक्त स्थल भएकाले यस पुस्तकले चापागाउँको सो पहिचानलाई सार्वजनिक गरेको छ । यस प्रकाशनले भविष्यमा चापागाउँको गरिमातर्फ विश्वसम्पदाको ध्यान आकृष्ट गर्न र स्थानीय तवरमा स्थानीय बासिन्दाहरूमा आफ्नो नगरको पुरातात्विक महत्वबारे अवगत गराउन पनि मद्दत गरेको छ । पुस्तकको दोस्रो खण्ड खासगरी यस प्रसंगमा विशेष महत्वको छ ।

प्रस्तुत पुस्तकको अभिलेखीय/ऐतिहासिक महत्व पनि निकै छ । लेखिकाले पुस्तकको परिशिष्ट - ७ मा "चापागाउँमा पाइएका पूर्व प्रकाशित अभिलेखहरू" शीर्षकमा १८ वटा अभिलेख संकलन गर्नु भएको छ । यसबाट चापागाउँको इतिहास जान्न ठूलो मद्दत पुगेको छ । लेखिकाले सांस्कृतिक सम्पदाहरूका केही चित्र प्रस्तुत गरेजस्तै यी अभिलेखहरूको चित्र पनि समावेश गर्नु भएको भए पुस्तकको महत्व भन्नु बढ्ने थियो ।

समीक्षाको क्रममा प्रस्तुत पुस्तकका केही कमजोर पक्षहरूलाई पनि औल्याउनु सान्दर्भिक हुनेछ । पुस्तकमा केही भाषिक कमजोरीहरूका साथै ठाउँ ठाउँमा शुद्धीगत (पुफ) गल्ती पनि देखिएका छन् जसले गर्दा पाठक वर्गलाई पढ्दा असजिलो हुने देखिन्छ । लेखिकाले पुस्तक तयार गर्नुभन्दा पहिले भाषा सम्पादन तथा शुद्धीमा ध्यान दिनु भएको भए पाठक वर्गलाई पढ्न सरल हुने थियो । यो एक लेख नभई पुस्तक भएकाले पाठकले बढी भाषिक सम्पादनको अपेक्षा राखेको हुन्छ ।

चापागाउँका सांस्कृतिक सम्पदाको वर्णनको क्रममा नेपालका विविध तथा मौलिक सामाजिक, धार्मिक तथा सांस्कृतिक परम्परालाई जनतासमक्ष चिनाउने लेखिकाको प्रयासलाई सराहनीय मान्नु पर्दछ । तर चापागाउँको ऐतिहासिक, धार्मिक र सांस्कृतिक पक्षलाई केलाउँदा प्रामाणिकता भन्दा किम्बदन्ती तथा जनश्रुतिको आधार बढी देखाइएको छ । पुस्तकमा चापागाउँबारे अरु थप ऐतिहासिक प्रमाण देखाउन सके पुस्तक बढी स्तरीय हुने थियो ।

पुस्तकको पृष्ठ १६ मा लेखिकाले प्याङ्गागाउँका सांस्कृतिक परम्पराहरूको वर्णनको क्रममा वैवाहिक सम्बन्धबारे लेख्नु भएको छ । त्यसमा प्याङ्गागाउँका ज्यापुहरूले "आफ्ना फुपु चेला मामाचेली भएसम्म अन्यसँग वैवाहिक नाता जोड्न नपाउने नियम छ" लेख्नु भएको छ । तर यस भनाईमा अस्पष्टता र असामञ्जस्यता देखिन्छ किनभने नेवार जातिमा फुपु चेला मामाचेलीबीच विवाह सम्बन्ध जोडिँदैन । यसबारे लेखिका स्पष्ट हुनुहुन्न ।

प्राचीनकाल देखिनै अस्तित्वमा रहेको, धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक सामाजिक दृष्टिले महत्वपूर्ण चापागाउँबारे पुस्तक लेखी प्रकाशन गरेर लेखिकाले इच्छुक पाठक वर्गलाई सहयोग पुऱ्याएकी छन् । यो पुस्तक लेखिकाले पहिलाको भिलेज प्रोफाइललाई परिमार्जित गरी थप नयाँ कुराहरूको जानकारी दिएकी छन् । यसमा चापागाउँसम्बन्धी प्रकाशित तथा

अप्रकाशित केही थप सामाग्रीहरू तथा तस्वीरहरू प्रयोग गरेर लेखिकाले पुस्तकलाई पठनीय बनाएकी छन् ।

पुस्तकमा चापागाऊँमा बढी संख्यामा रहेका नेवारहरूबारे थोरै विवरण प्रस्तुत गरिएको भएता पनि लेखिकाले सबैले बुझ्ने सरल भाषामा पुस्तक लेखेकी छन्, जुन यही नै लेखिकाको सराहनीय कार्य हो ।

पुस्तकमा दिइएका स्थानीय कलाकृतिका चित्रहरूले पुस्तकको पुरातात्विक महत्वलाई बढाएको छ । पुस्तकको छपाई सामान्यतः ठीकै छ । त्यसैगरी वर्तमान सन्दर्भमा यसको मूल्य पनि बढी भन्न सकिन्छ । यस पुस्तकले उपत्यकाका अन्य नेवार वस्तीको सांस्कृतिक अध्ययन प्रस्तुत गर्न एक ढाँचा प्रस्तुत गरेको छ । पुस्तकको सर्वाधिक बलियो पक्ष यही हो ।

विषय समाविष्टिका दृष्टिले पुस्तकको आकार निकै सानो (पृष्ठ ८४) छ । यस पुस्तकलाई चापागाऊँको 'आँखीभ्याल' को रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । भविष्यमा लेखिकाले वा अन्य कसैले चापागाऊँको इतिहास र संस्कृतिबारे एक वृहद् ग्रन्थ तयार गर्न जुटेमा यसले गतिलो आधार भने प्रदान गरेको छ ।

गंगा खरेल

BOOK REVIEW

Khatry, Prem Kumar, Ananda Prasad Srestha, Anand Aditya, Hari Prasad Shrestha, Dev Raj Dahal (eds.) 2004. *Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah: Man Behind the Persona*. Nepal Mountaineering Association, Kathmandu, pp. 344, photo albums 144 with 5 appendices (price not stated)

Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah (1942-2001), who died a tragic death on June 1, 2001 along with his wife princess Sharada Shah and other royal family members, was the former Executive Director of Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University for almost seven years (1983-1989). The present review has two objectives: i) to pay sincere tribute to Kumar Khadga for his excellent contributions to enhance the status of CNAS internationally as the Executive Director of CNAS, and ii) to introduce to the readers the lesser known side of Kumar Khadga - the man behind the persona, as depicted in the book.

The book under review is the biography of Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah, a man with a multi-faceted personality. Narratives of his life are drawn from the memories of persons with whom Kumar Khadga spent his time in different stages of his career. He left behind many memories of his private and public life but it was rather difficult to write a good biography about Kumar Khadga as he lived a life with two distinct identities: a person with the background of a middle class family who started his career as a clerk in the British embassy, and later became a part of the royalty after marrying princess Sharada, the second sister of the present king. In other words, his career interestingly combined a double role of sorts in the hierarchically organized Nepali society. For many, his roles appeared ambivalent and elusive especially for those who were not in close contact with him in his wide network of acquaintanceship. But the editors of the book have done a remarkably good job in producing a highly readable account of a man whose life is unquestionably worth noting.

The book has six sections: Personal life, Sports, Mountaineering, Academics, Miscellany and jottings from the Pen of Kumar Khadga himself.

In "Personal Life" 10 brief notes on Kumar Khadga's personal life have been presented: three by his two blood brothers and a niece, three by his closest friends and other four by those who worked at Sharada Sadan. This section notes Kumar Khadga as a good brother, father, husband, student, and cook. The account by Lalit Bikram Shah, his blood brother is touching as he narrates their family life and school days and how "Thulu"(Kumar Khadga the elder bother) played a significant role in the family as a loving brother, father and teacher.

In the section on "Sports" seven notes are presented in which Kumar Khadga is depicted as a fine sportsman, a good football player (in one of the football games he even broke his leg according to Dr. Gurung) and a cricketer (in one cricket game he scored a century, Komal Pandey notes). He later in his chequered life became the Member Secretary of the National Sports Council in 1967 and remained in that position for ten years. During this period he played dynamic roles in establishing gymnasiums and sports centers in Kathmandu and various districts of Nepal to develop sports. In addition, because of his able managerial role in sports, Nepali players started participating in the Olympics and Asian games!

The third section on "Mountaineering" includes 12 notes, mostly written by his colleagues of the Mountaineering Association of Nepal. Kumar Khadga was the founder President of Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) where he worked for almost 17 years (1973-1990). NMA under his able and dynamic leadership and innovative ideas became a prominent institution for mountaineers in Nepal. He launched a joint expedition to climb Mount Everest, where he himself went up to as far as the Base Camp. He also laid the foundation stone of the International Mountain Museum in Pokhara so that " the history of mountain activities could be maintained and preserved".

In section four, "Academics" there are nine short-notes on Kumar Khadga, depicting his research skills and writing, written mostly by his close colleagues of CNAS. As Professor Prayag Raj Sharma rightly pointed out that though he was initially received a little coolly at CNAS, he really managed to handle academics rather well by his skill in writing, oratory power and his open, receptive and friendly behavior with everybody. It was he who hired academics of different political allegiances to work at CNAS. He organized many national and international seminars and two of them are

regarded to be very important from the national perspective. The national five-day seminar organized by CNAS at Annapurna Hotel, Kathmandu in 1986 on the occasion of the 25-year Panchayat jubilee celebration, in which most of the seminar participants criticized the Panchayat regime is a case in point. It became a hot topic for discussion between academics and pro-panchayat regime supporters in those days and Kumar Khadga played a mediating role between the two groups. Likewise, the international seminar on "Regional Security in South Asia" conducted in 1985 elevated the status of CNAS as an important research institution in South Asia. He always questioned the "intellectual honesty" of scholars in different forums and seminars. In his tenure at CNAS, three more periodicals, *Strategic Studies Series*, *CNAS Year Review* and *CNAS Forum*, were added in addition to *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*. Except *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, all other periodicals gradually phased out from CNAS because of financial and other technical problems.

The section five on "Miscellany" has nine short notes contributed by a medical doctor, diplomat, lawyer and journalists. Finally, Kumar Khadga himself was a good writer, which he clearly demonstrates in section six, "From the Pen of Kumar Khadga". In these writings, written under different pen names he presents himself as a scholar, a poet, a nationalist and a romantic poet. There is a lot the book has to offer, depending upon what a reader is looking for.

- Dilli R. Dahal